

Imaginative Extension of the Self into Cultural Others: A
conceptual model for building cross-cultural understanding in
Europe via transcultural aesthetics

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Acknowledgements and preface

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The idea for this dissertation originates from my academic and professional background in visual arts, media and communications and from the observation that within the creative act sources of inspiration and frames of reference transcend cultural, medial and disciplinary boundaries. Thus, artistic expressions can be considered as transcultural and transculturalizing *per se*. At the same time, this research is an indirect reflection of my personal experiences of migration, education, professional development and living in a state of in-betweenness across Europe in the last ten years.

I discovered Europe as a cultural and a media entity when my cassette tapes with children's literature (Alice in Wonderland, Pippi Longstocking, The Little Prince) were sporadically pre-recorded by my exhilarated parents with semi-blocked censored emissions of Deutsche Welle and Radio Free Europe – reverberating expectations of a fall of a wall. All my children's stories were re-encoded with the dream of a united Europe and freedom of speech in Bulgaria, which are still in search and yet to be found.

Along with the multiple opportunities and freedom of movement, the subtle prejudices and bureaucratic restrictions, which have targeted my Eastern Europeanness during the years of transition (after joining the EU in 2007), have shaped my perception that Europe stays only a dream – to belong. The senses of European belonging, which I have experienced, have been mostly tangible within intellectual exchanges, shared creativity and artistic work.

In this sense, I express my personal thanks to my mother Dona Nedelcheva for her endless understanding and for introducing me to visual culture and modern art at an early stage, and insisting that Abstract Art is the point of no return. Her persistent practice of oil painting and long-term professional experience as an artist, curator and former director of George Papazov Art Gallery (Bulgaria) have inspired my own connection with art making, and consequently theorizing art. Our collective project from 2003 “You cannot see me, but I’m here” devoted to the unhappened 50th birthday of my father Peter Markov (whom we lost a year before that) marked the beginning of my theoretical interest in media and the potential of creative medium to transcend interpersonal sensitivity. “You cannot see me, but I’m here” repeats on loop a line from a theatre performance by him; similarly, in the puppet theatre where he used to work his puppet characters are still alive on stage sonified by his voice and animated by other actors. Returning to this theatre hall through the years has become a cathartic experience, while visiting the European cities and puppet festivals he had toured has shaped my early dreams of wanderlust and personal understanding of Europe as a shared cultural space.

I am also deeply grateful to my grandfather Nedelcho Dimitrov (who departed in 2014) for his undoubtful support for all my academic endeavours. His own pre-occupation with Europe’s destiny dates to an early active membership within the Bulgarian Antifascist Movement before the end of WWII, and specifically his university education right after the war and scientific and fieldwork later have been inspirational for me.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to propose a conceptual model on transcultural aesthetics, which articulates how creative use of artistic media could enhance cross-cultural understanding and the emergence of a shared European social imaginary. This exploration departs from the hypothesis that creative expressions allow for imaginative extension of the Self into cultural Others, based on theoretical views that treat the constitution of empathic imagination. With this regard, the research maps ‘another Europe’ constituted by artistic employment of creative mediums in contrast with mass media dominated visions of Europe as a space of *utterly failing multiculturalism*. The dissertation supports an understanding of transculturality, which should be read not simply as the compilation of cultures (rather suitable for the multicultural idiom), but as the transformation of cultures (beyond the nation-state framework of reference) and the emergence of new cultural entities within cross-cultural and creative interaction.

One of the central contributions of this study is to reconceptualise transcultural aesthetics as an ongoing praxis of cultural and creative *trans-coding*. Moreover, it is argued that transcultural aesthetics is defined by several complementary *trans-coding* modalities: representation of transcultural identities as a discursive strategy for the negotiation of cultural differences; sampling of cultural repertoires in intertextual and intermedial order as an expression of symbolic resistance and generation of a *third space* between cultures; *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle of critical media participation; and embodied cross-cultural affiliation, as a transculturalizing strategy at a non-verbal, sensorial and affective level.

The broad objective of this research project is to bridge the gap between media and cultural studies, by suggesting that the participatory aspects of our *convergence culture* should be taken into consideration while studying processes of transculturation. Furthermore, it is argued that transcultural aesthetics goes hand in hand with a media culture, which turns head from *regarding the pain of others* in order to embody through a subjective camera a sense of “I am the Other.”

This research aims to construct a transdisciplinary theoretical framework that conceptually corresponds to the cubist-like multiplicity of perspectives, which is intrinsic for the transcultural model. The study has been carried out via media content, discourse and aesthetic analysis of the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe* (2011 – 2013), the participatory initiative *Re-mapping Europe – Remix Project* (2013)

and the artistic investigation *The Machine to Be Another* (2014) that transcend the boundaries, which delineate Europe from outside and from within. Overall, the discussion is supported by 45 examples of media arts (film, video and interactive installation art), which are symptomatic of European socio-cultural dynamics and signify the emergence of a shared transcultural European imaginary.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context – creative concerns about Europe

“They won’t say: the times were dark,
Rather: why were their poets silent?”¹

Bertolt Brecht, *In Dark Times* (1937)

Artistic creativity related to contemporary Europe has been marked by an emerging trend towards the representation of migration, displacement, border-crossing, transnational interaction, the leitmotif of transcending cultural boundaries and building cross-cultural understanding between Self and cultural Others. Meanwhile, mainstream media has constructed a European social imaginary which maintains stereotypes, prejudices and discursive hysteria towards cultural Others, reflected in current social phenomena in European societies, such as the rise of right-wing populism and xenophobia, loss of empathy towards refugees and newcomers, intra-European intolerance and stigmatisation along North-South and West-East axes of division, the Brexit vote and expected wave of Eurosceptic referenda across Europe. Contrarily, artist, creative thinkers and media makers have expressed critical engagement and have offered alternative representations and aesthetic experiences that re-imagine contemporary Europe as a possible dialogical space of transcultural co-existence, which counteracts dynamics of exclusion and negative ‘othering’. Therefore, the study of Europe-related creativity emerges as a relevant variable for rendering senses of European belonging and understanding European social realities.

As creative expressions, which have managed to rethink Europe as a shared cultural space can be considered the film *Europa* (1991) by Lars von Trier from his conceptual *Europe* trilogy reinventing the social crisis in postwar Europe, the cinematic anthology *Visions of Europe* (also initiated by von Trier in 2004), and specifically the short *Invisible State* (Aisling Walsh, 2004) featuring the poet – playwright Gerard Mannix Flynn and his spoken word poetry, whose relevance re-emerges in the context of the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe. As artistic interpretations that have grasped significant attention can be mentioned Rem Koolhaas’ new European Union flag rendered as a *Barcode* (2001) from fragments of national Member States’ flags, or David Cerny’s controversial object-based installation *Entropa* (2009) on prejudices and

¹ Bertolt Brecht. *Poems, 1913-1956*. (trans. and eds.) John Willet and Ralph Manheim (London and New York: Methuen, 1979), 274.

clichés about EU nation states (both, one might say, sarcastically commissioned by the Council of the European Union). In a similar conceptual direction, comes the online project *Mapping Stereotypes* (ongoing since 2010) by Alphadesigner.com that has turned into a form of internet folklore. As a recent trend can be also mapped the emergence of transnational community art projects that merge diverse medial platforms into forms of transmedia storytelling about Europe, such as the projects *Europe4U*, *Routes&Routes* and *Farewell Comrades!*.

While artists and media makers have been conscious about Europe's contemporary condition, the constellation of topics that they treat often have not been exclusively articulated by them as 'European.' Rather, creative concerns about Europe thematically translate into a range of subjects, such as migration, border-crossing, living in diaspora, home as an imaginary entity, multilingualism, fragmented identities formation and multiplicity of cultural belongings. To a certain extent this phenomenon renders the complexity of defining the 'European' dimensions of creative and media expressions, which are related to and/or produced in Europe.

The emerging academic discourse on a shared European visual culture has further explored the role of media in visualizing and constituting Europe as a shared semantic space.² Among the medial art forms that have gained most systematic critical account is certainly European film, which signifies the constitution of a shared European imaginary. According to Catherine Fowler, the intricacy of defining the term 'European' in the context of cinematic culture depends on shifting geographical, cultural and aesthetic boundaries. The 'European' in European cinema can be used to describe a number of critical enquiries: "the geographical boundaries of the European, the conceptual spaces to which the study of films and filmmakers in Europe refer and the methodologies that have been used to analyze and theorize European films and filmmakers."³ Thomas Elsaesser considers that European cinema today should not be simply understood as an accumulation of national cinemas or as a compilation of specific *auteurs* and *new waves*, so that "the criteria for what is meant by "European" have yet to be found and defined."⁴ Thus, Elsaesser suggests a process of "re-thinking as well as un-thinking European cinema" by considering its essentially mixed and

² See also Miyase Christensen and Nezih Erdoğan, "The Many Faces of Film and Media in Europe," in *Shifting Landscapes: Film and Media in European Context*, eds. Miyase Christensen and Nezih Erdoğan (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 1-6.

³ Catherine Fowler (ed.), *The European Cinema Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 67.

relational nature that “contributes to cultural identities that are more inclusive and processual, more multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, more dialogical and interactive, able to embrace the ‘new Europe,’ the popular star- and genre cinema, as well as the diaspora cinemas within Europe itself.”⁵ A similar turn towards the phenomenon of de-centring or blurring the boundaries between core and periphery within European cinematic traditions has been also observed by Dina Iordanova, who discovers the representation of migration and transnational interactions as a step in this direction.⁶ Mike Wayne has also suggested that the pan-European dimension can thematically emerge out of travel narratives that bring cultures and cultural identities together.⁷ The conceptual and thematic engagement of contemporary European filmmakers with the subject of border-crossing have been also theorised by the contributors to *Zoom in, Zoom out: Crossing Borders in Contemporary European Cinema* (2007)⁸. Furthermore, the cinematic leitmotif of crossing boundaries can be extended into a broader conceptual framework for studying the emergence of a shared European imaginary. The outlined context also serves as a conceptual background for exploring the symbolic and processual ‘European’ dimensions of creative initiatives and artistic discourses, rather than EU funding frameworks that also evoke ‘Europeanness.’ By recognizing that EU cultural policies on pan-European audiovisual industries (such as Creative Europe) can foster the constitution of a shared semantic space, the dissertation marks this stance as a relevant direction for further research, beyond its own scope.

This research explores artists and media makers’ European consciousness within the analysis of three case studies: the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe* (2011 – 2013) that reflects on European identity and the state of being European, the participatory initiative *Re-mapping Europe – Remix Project* (2013), which contests dominant media representations of migration in European societies by re-mixing media and film archives, and the interactive installation *The Machine to Be Another* (2014) that explores the connection between identity and empathy via embodiment. Overall, the dissertation involves 45 cinematic and media arts examples (film, video, interactive

⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁶ Dina Iordanova, “Displaced? Shifting Politics of Place and Itinerary in International Cinema,” in *Senses of Cinema*, issue 14, <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2001/feature-articles/displaced/> (accessed 1 March 2014).

⁷ Mike Wayne, *Politics of Contemporary European Cinema* (Bristol: Intellect Ltd., 2002), 74.

⁸ Sandra Barriaes-Bouche and Marjorie Attignol Salvodon (eds.), *Zoom in, Zoom out: Crossing Borders in Contemporary European Cinema* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007).

installation art), which are symptomatic of European socio-cultural dynamics and signify the emergence of a shared European imaginary.

1.2 Research objectives and main contributions

By taking into consideration recent transnational art projects in Europe and artistic and participatory media expressions, the specific aim of this dissertation is to examine to what extent artistic discourses and creative practices have the potential to constitute a transcultural European imaginary that transcends boundaries between Self and cultural Others.

This study proposes a conceptual model on transcultural aesthetics, which articulates how creative use of artistic media could enhance cross-cultural understanding in Europe and the emergence of a shared European social imaginary. With this regard, the research maps ‘another Europe’ constituted by artistic employment of creative mediums in contrast with mass media dominated visions of Europe as a space of *utterly failing multiculturalism*.⁹ The dissertation supports an understanding of transculturality, which should be read not simply as the compilation of cultures (rather suitable for the multicultural idiom), but as the transformation of cultures (beyond the nation-state framework of reference) and the emergence of new cultural entities within cross-cultural and creative interaction. Furthermore, this study recognizes as a transcultural aesthetic practice not any re-combination of cultural codes, but rather, those forms of cross-cultural fusion, which entail negotiation of cultural differences, deconstruction of processes of stereotyping and *de-Orientalization* of the European imaginary from processes of cultural ‘othering’.

In the context of augmented cultural globalization, mobility on the shifting boundary between real and virtual, and increased exchange of visual signs and texts in our contemporary *mediascape*,¹⁰ addressed by Arjun Appadurai, Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Manuel Castells among other authors, this dissertation aims at mapping the constitution of transcultural aesthetics via the postmodern creative gestures of appropriation, quotation and recycling of cultural codes and creative practices. The project conceptualizes transculturality as the sampling and translation of cultural

⁹ Referring to the highly contested statement of Chancellor Angela Merkel from 2010.

¹⁰ See also Arjun Appadurai *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

repertoires, recontextualization and resemantization of signs, which can be a creative act practiced by the participants (both artist and spectators) in the creative process. One of the main proposals of this study is to reconsider transcultural aesthetic praxis as a creative gesture of cross-cultural enunciation and a critical discursive strategy of building cross-cultural understanding. Moreover, this research project addresses transculturation as a processes of imaginative extension of the Self into cultural Others, which could be also studied as a modality of bodily aesthetic experience, since cultural engagement could be acquired through sensory involvement (such as rhythm in music, montage in film) and corporeal participation in the creative process. Therefore, the originality of this research project also lies in following a paradigmatic shift from media representation towards embodiment within the constitution of cultural identities and within the exploration of the transcultural paradigm. Thus, the broad objective of this research project is to bridge the gap between media and cultural studies, by suggesting that the experiential and participatory aspects of our *convergence culture* (Jenkins 2006) and the active role of both artists and audiences in encoding/decoding (Hall 1973/1980) and potentially *trans-coding* meanings should be taken into consideration while studying processes of transculturation.

The central contributions of this study is to reconceptualise transcultural aesthetics as an ongoing praxis of cultural and creative *trans-coding*, defined by four complementary modalities: representation of transcultural identities as a discursive strategy for the negotiation of cultural differences; sampling of cultural repertoires in intertextual, intermedial and cross-cultural order as an expression of symbolic resistance and generation of a *third space* between cultures; *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle of critical media participation – a re-thought version of Stuart Hall's communication model of encoding/decoding, defined by the generation of new meanings at the receiving end; and embodied cross-cultural affiliation, as a transculturalizing strategy at a non-verbal, sensorial and affective level.

1.3 Theoretical framework

This research project is the first academic study, which connects the concept of *transcoding* with the generic notion of transcultural aesthetics, used by Helff (2015, 2007)¹¹, Tanchio, (2014)¹², Markova (2012)¹³, Hutchinson (2001)¹⁴ among others in order to describe cross-cultural translation of artistic practices and cultural influences. Tanchio, specifically, suggests a definition of transcultural aesthetics in terms of comparative aesthetics as developed by Eliot Deutsch in his *Studies in Comparative Aesthetics* (1975). Therefore, transcultural aesthetics can be understood as a composite concept involving both the hermeneutics (analysis, interpretation, reconstruction) as well as the praxis of art making and the aesthetic experience of cultures other than one's own. Moreover, Tanchio recognizes that transcultural aesthetics is the interconnection and unity between theory and practice within a form of practical knowledge, which plays out within the praxis of art practitioners.¹⁵ With this regard, this dissertation aims at articulating further transcultural aesthetics as a cross-cultural creative praxis by drawing upon theoretical perspectives (supported by empirical artistic examples) on transculturality, representation, arts and media participation, as well as experiential and embodied media involvement. Since, within our contemporary media culture, creative expressions are also media-induced expressions, as Douglas Kellner has indirectly implied¹⁶, it becomes relevant to address transcultural aesthetic practices also as media practices. Furthermore, in this context, it is reasonable to question what media ethics accompany transcultural aesthetics and whether the latter operates via critical and creative media use.

¹¹ See also Sissy Helff, "Fragile balance: Imaginary Europes, transcultural aesthetics and discourses of European identity in Pawel Pawlikowski's *Last Resort* and Steven Spielberg's *War Horse*" in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* Vol. 51, No. 2, (2015), 132–143.

Sissy Helff "Signs Taken For Truth: Orchestrating Transcultural Aesthetics through Narrative Unreliability," in: *Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English* Vol XXIX. Sabine Volk-Birke und Julia Lippert (eds.). (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2007), 277-288.

¹² Paul Albert Tanchio, *Transcultural Aesthetics and Contemporary Art: Pursuing Unity Traditions of Art Practitioners* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2014).

¹³ Lora Markova, "Mapping In-Betweenness. On the Representation of Transculturality in *The Edge of Heaven* (Fatih Akin 2007)" in Tamcke, M. / Klein, L. *Europeans In-Between: Identities in a (Trans-) Cultural Space*, (Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2012).

¹⁴ Elizabeth Hutchinson "Modern Native American Art: Angel DeCora's Transcultural Aesthetics" in *Art History and Indigenous Studies. The Art Bulletin*; December 2001, Vol. 83 Issue 4, 740-756.

¹⁵ Paul Albert Tanchio, *Transcultural Aesthetics and Contemporary Art: Pursuing Unity Traditions of Art Practitioners* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2014), 30.

¹⁶ See also Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

The exploration of the transcultural paradigm follows Wolfgang Welsch conceptualization of transculturality as “the puzzling form of cultures today”, which has emerged by opposing variables to the established terms of multiculturalism and interculturalism. Departing from Theodor Adorno’s perception that cultures should be studied “beyond both the heterogeneous and the own,” Welsch argues that transculturality is the relevant model for understanding contemporary culture.¹⁷ His view considers the internal complexities and dynamics of every culture, as well as recognizes the degree to which cultures are becoming inseparably linked with one another. At the same time transculturality should not be understood as the unification of cultures: “it is, rather, intrinsically linked with the production of diversity.”¹⁸ A high degree of cultural variety exists just like in traditional single cultures. However, the differences are no longer articulated through a juxtaposition of clearly outlined cultures, but result between transcultural networks. These have both common and diverse aspects – showing overlaps and distinctions simultaneously. The process we are witnessing is a process of coexisting unification and differentiation.¹⁹ In this direction, one of the central contributions of this study to the transcultural paradigm will be to reconceptualise transculturality as an ongoing process of intertextual and intermedial remixing and recontextualization of signs and tropes across cultural boundaries. Moreover, the creative employment of transcultural repertoires could be rendered as discursive strategies, which trigger negotiation of cultural differences.

Since this project focuses on artistic medium productions, Stuart Hall’s study on representation and signifying practices will be adopted as another theoretical point of departure. Hall bridges a ‘linguistic’ *constructionist* approach (using the semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, together with Michel Foucault’s discursive perspective towards representation) with the post-structuralism philosophy of Jacques Derrida, which deconstructs the Saussurian model of signification and representation. Hall suggests that representation is a discursive strategy for the construction of significations, meanings and consequently cultural identities. Representation becomes the process or the medium through which these meanings are both created and reified. In this context, according to Hall, identity should be understood “as a ‘production’

¹⁷ Wolfgang Welsch, “Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today,” in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*. ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 194.

¹⁸ Wolfgang Welsch, “Going global or transcultural?” in *The Contemporary Study of Culture*, Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft u. Verkehr und Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften (Wien: Turia + Kant, 1999), 205.

¹⁹ Ibid.

which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.”²⁰ Thus, this research will suggest that the representation of transcultural identities and cross-cultural repertoires is a central aesthetic and strategic component of transculturality as a creative praxis.

Moreover, applying a semiotic approach (in reference to Roland Barthes’ concepts of *myth*²¹ and the polysemic sign), Stuart Hall develops a theory of representation as a dual relationship between encoding on behalf of the producer, and decoding on the side of the receiver. Hall assumes that events, objects and people do not possess stable meanings, but rather that the meanings are produced by the participants in a culture, who have the power to make things mean or signify something. The encoding/decoding model developed in the 1980’s in relation to the televisual circuit, foresees three hypothetical positions of decoding: *dominant-hegemonic code*, *a negotiated code* and *an oppositional code*, the last one of which directly relates to practices of *trans-coding*. By considering the open-ended character of participatory media, this research will suggest that Hall’s model of representation (as encoding on the side of the producer and decoding on the side of the receiver) can be rethought into a chain-system of constant *encoding-decoding-encoding*, followed by a process of new encoding at the receiving end.

The active role of the audience and the emergence of a participatory culture has been theorised by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006). Jenkins expands the understanding of interactivity to a mode of participatory culture that does not primarily signify a technological revolution; rather it is a cultural shift, altering the relation between author and audience and suggesting decentralization of cultural production and opinion formation.²² Similarly, this study will trace to what extent European creative initiatives allow for audience participation and audiences engage creatively and critically into transculturalising strategies of encoding new meanings.

From another perspective, John Dewey’s *Art as Experience* (1934), Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1954), Umberto Eco’s *The Open Work*

²⁰ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222.

²¹ Analyzing the cognitive dimensions of representation, Barthes discusses the levels of denotation – as a *naturalizing* mechanism, and connotation, where *codes* can be recognized. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (1990 ed. London: Vintage, 1957), 142-143.

²² Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 222.

(1962) and Susan Sontag's essay *Against Interpretation* (1964) are among the early central texts that have marked the path towards a 'participatory turn' and embodiment within the discipline of audience (art) reception. More 'tangible' empirical examples of embodied identification can be recognized in Winfried Fluck's study on American popular culture and aesthetic experience. In extension of Wolfgang Iser's study of representation as a performative act, Fluck argues that during the act of reception, the text (or mediated content) represents two things at once: the world of the text and the imaginary elements added to it by the receiver. This "doubleness" is itself the aesthetic experience that makes us simultaneously articulate imaginary elements and look at them from the outside. Then, aesthetic experience is a state "in-between" that allows us to be "both ourselves and someone else at the same time."²³ Drawing upon Richard Shusterman's notion of *somaesthetics*²⁴, Fluck also considers that engagement with the culture becomes increasingly "embodied."²⁵ For instance, "the sensuous effect of music creates associations that are shaped not by narrative, but by mood. In the video clip, this effect becomes the key principle for textual organization."²⁶ Furthermore, Fluck argues that cultural objects provide gratification via "hidden sources of aesthetic experience" – "somatic responses to the "immediate experience" of image, colour and sound can trigger such transfer processes more easily and effectively than moral claims or intellectual arguments."²⁷ Therefore, this research project will propose that transculturation could be also studied as a modality of non-narrative somatic aesthetic experiences which imaginatively extend the Self into cultural Others.

1.4 Hypotheses and research questions

The exploration departs from the hypothesis that creative expressions allow for imaginative extension of the Self into cultural Others, based on theoretical views that treat the constitution of empathic imagination. As Kwame Anthony Appiah has stated, attachment to foreign cultures begins with the sort of imaginative engagement one experiences when reading a novel, watching a movie or attending to a work of art that

²³ Winfried Fluck, "California Blue. Americanization as Self-Americanization," in Alexander Stephan (ed.) *Americanization and Anti-Americanism. The German Encounter with American Culture after 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 228.

²⁴ Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live. Aesthetic Alternatives for the End of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000)

²⁵ Winfried Fluck, "California Blue. Americanization as Self-Americanization," 230.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. 222.

speaks from a different place than one's own.²⁸ Julia Kristeva has proposed to accommodate cultural difference by imagining ourselves as the other and recognizing ourselves as foreigners, as *strangers to ourselves*.²⁹ Similarly, Mikhail Epstein conceptualizes transculturality as the difference in identity shaping, which is the state of being different not only from others, but also from one's own self.³⁰ Moreover, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin have argued that immersion into virtual reality (and the identification with fictional characters) generates a sense of virtual empathy and the ability of the viewer to empathise through imagining.³¹ Therefore, it can be suggested that artistic and creative productions could play a significant role in transcending cultural boundaries. Thus, the central hypothesis studied by this dissertation is that creative expressions and artistic discourses on contemporary Europe constitute a transcultural European imaginary and employing transcultural aesthetic practices, which transcends boundaries between Self and cultural Others.

Moreover, this dissertation draws upon the empirical observation the creative process is transcultural *per se*, since inspiration operates by translating codes and fusing impulses beyond cultural and disciplinary boundaries. Stuart Hall has suggested that the dialogical processes of meaning-making relates to the practice of *trans-coding*, inscribing the notion to Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogical model of culture³². While Bakhtin rather employs the concept of transcendence, the notion of *trans-coding* belongs to Yuri Lotman's structuralist semiotics and his preoccupation with the topic of creativity. According to Lotman, a text with only a communicative function is composed of one code, while the creative text is heterogeneous and heterostructural in terms of coding. Thus, creativity can be addressed as a problem of generating new meanings and transcoding sequence-structures³³. With this regard, this research proposes to conceptualise transcultural aesthetics as praxis of cultural and creative *trans-coding*, defined by four complementary modalities. Therefore, the research also studies the following hypotheses:

²⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 85.

²⁹ Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

³⁰ Mikhail Epstein, "Culture – Culturology – Transculture," in *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 280-306.

³¹ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Re-mediation: Understanding New Media*, 247.

³² Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications & Open University, 1997), 270.

³³ Lotman, 1965, 23 quoted in Boguslaw Zylko, "Notes on Yuri Lotman's structuralism" in *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (London: SAGE, 2015), vol. 18 (I) 27-42, 36 (accessed 17 May 2015).

- 1) The representation of transcultural identities and transcultural tropes is a *trans-coding* modality of transcultural aesthetics, since it discursively (re)produces transculturation, subverts cultural stereotypes and transcends socio-spatial boundaries between Self and cultural Others.
- 2) The intertextual sampling of cultural repertoires and the recontextualization of existing media content *trans-code* prevailing imagery and meanings and generate novel semantic interconnections and representations.
- 3) The participatory aspects of our media culture allow for audiences to participate critically in the production of discourses via a communicative cycle of *encoding-decoding-encoding* of new meanings at the receiving end.
- 4) The sensorial dimensions of creative expressions (e.g rhythm in music, montage in film) allow for non-narrative and somatic cultural engagement or embodied transculturation, which *trans-codes* discursive categories between Self and cultural Others at a sensory level.

Correspondingly, the research project begins with the literature review question: To what extent has the existing scholarship addressed the notion of transcultural imaginary? The central research questions posed by this study are: Which media modalities and creative practices define transcultural aesthetics? In how far have creative expressions reproduced transcultural identities and repertoires as a discursive strategy for the negotiating cultural differences in Europe? To what extent do the selected case studies mix codes and repertoires in a cross-cultural order in order to generate new meanings? In how far do audiences participate critically in the production of European narratives? In how far do the selected productions re-enact and embody the experiences of being and/or living in Europe?

1.5 Methodology

The methodological design involves the construction of a transdisciplinary *third space* between cultural studies, media studies, film studies and (media) art history, which corresponds conceptually to the discussed topic of transcending cultural (and disciplinary) boundaries. Thus, the method of research aims to establish not a ‘static’, but a ‘dynamic’ theoretical framework, which develops *rhizomatically* within the research stages and chapters by integrating interconnected theoretical concepts and disciplinary nodes. Departing from a literature review on the theoretical dimensions of

the transcultural paradigm and the transcultural imaginary, the research design follows the construction of a new conceptual model, composed of four complementary modalities that articulate the constitution of transcultural aesthetics as a praxis of critical and creative *trans-coding*. The model is applied to the analysis of the selected case studies, also supported by a triangulation between aesthetic, discourse and media content analysis.

Media content analysis is used as an unobtrusive method, which allows for exploration of how visual texts (the selected artworks and media productions) could be used for understanding socio-cultural processes and generating theories about social life. The focus of inquiry is to study cultural forms and practices that construct cultural processes of transculturation. Discourse analysis (as developed by Teun van Dijk)³⁴ directly relates to the overall conceptual framework of the research project referring to Michel Foucault's discourse/power/knowledge postmodern theory and Jacques Derrida's post-structuralism of critical deconstruction and negotiation of difference. Aesthetic analysis has been conducted by bridging elements of systematic film analysis (for instance, as suggested by James Monaco)³⁵ and new media analysis (as practiced by media art historians such as Oliver Grau).³⁶ The analytical process is supported by coding of: central themes and repertoires (such as, the recurring motifs of crossing borders, migration, the cultural sensitivity of 'in-betweenness', fragmentation of one's cultural identity, etc.); frames and discourses producing social meanings (such as, construction/deconstruction of negative stereotypes and perceptions, negotiation of difference); aesthetic practices (such as, crossing genres, intertextual and intermedial mixing of artistic influences); and modalities of media participation (such as platforms for user-generated content.) The generation of codes begins deductively, based on the developed theoretical framework, proposed hypotheses and conceptual model on the constitution of transcultural aesthetics. Simultaneously, during the analytical process, code categories are generated inductively – directly from the specific case studies and related creative media expressions. Thus, to a certain extent, the research design follows a spiral model applying elements of grounded theory.

³⁴ Teun van Dijk, *Elite Discourse and Racism*. (Newbury Park: SAGE, 1993).

³⁵ James Monaco. *How to Read a Film. Movies, Media, and Beyond*. (Oxford University Press; 4th edition, 2009).

³⁶ Oliver Grau. *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

1.6 Case studies

The dissertation explores as case studies three recent creative initiatives: the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe* (2011 – 2013), the remix project *Re-mapping Europe* (2013) and the art investigative project *The Machine to Be Another* (2014).

United States of Europe (2011 – 2013) was designed as a platform for European citizens' participation and direct reflections on European identity and social, political and cultural aspects of today's Europe. The travelling exhibition was on display between November 2011 and April 2013, visiting ten European countries, which co-organized the event (Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Portugal, Cyprus, Germany, Bulgaria, France, Ireland and Belgium – mentioned in the chronological order that the exhibits have followed). The project has been coordinated by Goethe Institute e. V in Paris, co-organized by nine institutions (the University of Lodz, Poland; the Lasipalatsi Film and Media Centre, Finland; The Red House, Bulgaria; the Centre of Culture and Art Initiatives, Lithuania; Pharos Arts Foundation, Cyprus; Transforma, Portugal, AIDA, Belgium; L'art au Quotidien, France, Cork Vision Centre and the National Sculpture Factory, Ireland) and co-funded by the EU Culture programme (2007 – 2013).

Remapping Europe – Remix Project (2013) was initiated by the Doc Next Network and coordinated by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), the Netherlands. It connected young media-makers from Spain, Poland, Turkey, and the UK, who used DIY (Do-It-Yourself) forms of media production and remixed existing news and film archives in order to contest mainstream media representations of migration in Europe. The initiative engaged 50 young creative media-makers with cross-cultural backgrounds and (im)migrant perspectives, who produced video remixes at five media labs organized in Seville, Warsaw, Lublin, Istanbul and London. The project was released in collaboration with four cultural hubs in each of the participating countries – the Association of the Creative Initiative 'e'(Poland), ZEMOS98 (Spain), MODE Istanbul (Turkey), the British Film Institute (BFI)'s Future Film Programme (UK) – and funded with support from the European Commission.

The Machine to Be Another by BeAnotherLab is an Open Source art investigative project addressing the relation between identity and empathy. Designed as an embodiment system, it merges performative elements with protocols of neuroscience experiments in order to provide users with the immersive experience of seeing themselves in the body of another person. The Lab, composed of an interdisciplinary

team of eight artists, researchers and activists, has developed *The Machine to Be Another* with the support of its Barcelona-based partners – the Media lab Hangar and the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. While *The Machine to Be Another* does not claim an exclusive engagement with the topic of Europeanness, it offers a universal creative perspective towards building cross-cultural understanding within and beyond Europe.

The ‘European’ profiles of *United States of Europe* and *Remapping Europe* lucidly relate to EU Culture funding and also direct towards the European Commission’s recent objectives towards building a new narratives for Europe³⁷. Although closely related to the genealogy of the selected artistic discourses, the aspect of European funding will not be directly tackled in the upcoming discussion, since it extends into the field of cultural policy, which is beyond the scope of this research. From a broader perspective, the ‘European’ features of the chosen art projects derive from the fact that they are produced and circulated in European cultural space and each one of them combines the creative efforts of international creative teams representing a variety of European countries. Moreover, the ‘European’ dimension that the dissertation has favoured to study can be foreseen in the potential of the case studies to articulate cultural process symptomatic of European cultural context. The central motivation for this selection of artefacts is based on their potential to cross the boundaries that delineate Europe from outside and within and deal with processes of transculturation. Each one of the selected artistic discourses, by its own aesthetic language and conceptual integrity, reveals a projection of Europe and re-imagines one’s experiences of being European or living in Europe. Some of the central themes that the case studies treat are displacement, migration, living in diaspora, and the fragmentation of one’s cultural identity in the interstice between cultural attachments, *imaginary homelands*, roots, spatial distances, reality and virtuality. What unites the selected artistic productions into a conceptual constellation is their transformative potential to symbolically destabilize internal and external differences and blur cultural boundaries between West-East, South-North, transatlantic relations, old, new and potential EU Member States, Christendom and Islam, real, imaginary and virtual.

³⁷ See also European Commission, *New Narrative for Europe* declaration launched April 2013 (online) http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/new-narrative/documents/declaration_en.pdf

1.7 Exclusion of topics

As an organizing principle the discussion has excluded the ‘European’ aspect of the discussed case studies as a product of European Union funding mechanisms or official EU institutional discourses. To a certain extent the conceptual integrity of a number of Europe-related current creative initiatives cannot be separated from their EU media and cultural policy genealogy that has potentially conditioned artists’ engagement with the ‘European’ theme. The significance of the interrelation between artistic creativity and European cultural and integrational policies is a distinctive topic that deserves specific in-depth research. Still, it expands beyond the scope of this dissertation, which has favoured to address the aesthetic practices and symbolic dimensions that define the European social imaginary. Moreover, since the dissertation focuses on artists’ transcultural consciousness about Europe, a range of media productions, which reproduce structures of cultural ‘othering’ have not been taken directly into consideration.

The current cultural context in Europe has been also marked by an emerging wave of Interactive Theatre initiatives that aim at involving members of ethnic minority communities, refugees and new comers to Europe as direct participants. As relevant examples can be mentioned: Aarhus Theatre (Denmark), Sadler’s Wells and Breakin’ Convention (United Kingdom), Dresden State Theatre and European Centre for the Arts Hellerau (Germany). The objectives of participatory theatre are to shift from a victimizing mode of representations *of* and *about* migrants into empowering narratives co-created *together with* new comers and community members, who participate as citizens, personalities and professionals.³⁸ While the conceptual and ethical dimensions of interactive and community theatre can be understood in terms of transcultural aesthetics, this dissertation does not explore examples of performative arts, since it focuses on the interconnection between (new) media production and cultural dynamics. Thus, the discussed creative initiatives constitute a broad compilation of media arts – including film, documentary, video art, multi-screen moving-image and interactive installation art. A fluent shift between film and digital technology has been suggested by Friedrich Kittler in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999), Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin in *Re-mediation: Understanding New Media* (2000), Lev Manovich in

³⁸ See also Benita Lipps (ed.) *Culture. Shift: Creative Leadership for Audience-Centric Performing Arts Organizations*. (Brussels: Theatron, 2015).

The Language of New Media (2001), Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006) among others. Thus, this mode of *re-mediation* of visual media as a constituent impulse of the imaginary has been used as the conceptual framework for the variety of selected artworks and medium specificities.

1.8 Outline of structure and chapters

The dissertation is organized in three main parts: literature review on transcultural imaginary (Chapter I), a conceptual model on transcultural aesthetics (Chapter II) and case studies analysis (Chapters III, IV and V). Chapter I addresses theoretical perspectives on transculturality, especially studied within the conceptualizations of Mikhail Epstein (1995, 1999) and Wolfgang Welsh (1999). It also explores the constitution of a transcultural imaginary (Ellen Berry, 1999) in relation to four interconnected conceptual dimensions, which have been empirically supported by examples of creative and artistic expressions.

First, the transcultural imaginary is studied in terms of spatiality and socio-spatial identity formation. The conceptualizations of a liminal, in-between *third space* where hybrid identities are constituted (Homi Bhabha, 1994) is related to the notion of *real-and-imagined thirdspace* (Edward Soja, 1996) which evokes a multiplicity of co-existing perspectives intrinsic for the transcultural paradigm. In correspondence, this theoretical basis is translated into the first *trans-coding* modality – representation of transcultural identities and processes of transculturation – discussed at the beginning of the second chapter. The theoretical discussion is supported by the documentary *Our Colonial Hangover* (Sunny Bergman, 2014) and the art installation *House of Eutopia* (Filip Berte, 2006 – 2013).

Second, the first chapter outlines the transcultural imaginary as an in-flux relationship between global and local cultural flows (Arjun Appadurai, 1996) and reverse flows (Rob Kroes, 2002) that co-exist in a *rhizomatic* potentiality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). Within the second chapter these theoretical aspects are projected into the second suggested modality – cross-cultural sampling of signs and repertoires, which performs a *trans-coding* and subversive function. For instance, the sampling of cultural codes into a creative *cut'n'mix* (to employ Dick Hebdige's rhetoric) can act as an expression of symbolic resistance, as exemplified by the discussed Banksy's critical graffiti on the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe. Sampling of cultural repertoires is also

a creative gesture, which constitutes a *third space* between cultures, e.g. between European and non-European sentiments as often eloquently displayed by Fatih Akin's cinematic expressions such as *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005) and *The Edge of Heaven* (2007).

Third, the first chapter tackles the interconnections between transcultural imaginary and the concepts of cultural citizenship (Nick Stevenson, 1997) and critical cosmopolitanism (Gerard Delanty, 2006) that emphasize the critical and educative potential of citizens' democratic, media and cultural participation. Translated into the second chapter, this conceptual background reappears within the third *trans-coding* modality of critical media participation via *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle of generating new meanings and alternative discourses. With this regard, Henry Jenkins (2006) recognizes the democratic and deliberative potential of user-generated content, while Nico Carpentier (2011) offers a direct critique on Jenkin's theory by suggesting a distinction of media participation at structural and content levels. The theoretical dimensions on critical media participation are exemplified by the transmedia community art initiatives *The Green Screen Diaries* (2015) and *U-CARE: Urban Culture Against Racism in Europe* (2012 – 2014).

Fourth, the first chapter completes the exploration on the constitution of transcultural imaginary by introducing theoretical perspectives related to processes of non-verbal, experiential and somatic cultural affiliation via *intermediate spaces* of transculturation between internal and external symbolic structures (Maya Nadig, 2004). In the second chapter, this theoretical stance translates into the fourth *trans-coding* modality of embodied transculturation. Several levels of embodiment can be distinguished: haptic representation (Laura Marks, 2000), immersive environments and affective images (Mark Hansen, 2004) and disruptive and intellectual montage as tools for extending transcultural perception (Suhr and Willerslev, 2013). In addition, the theoretical discussion is supported by the moving-image examples of the documentary *Shipwreck* (Morgan Knibbe, 2014) and the double-channel video installation *European Union Mayotte* (SUPERFLEX, 2015).

Chapter III explores as a case study the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe* (U.S.E) by analysing five of the featured video artworks that most lucidly deal with processes of transculturation. Moreover, the analysis engages the U.S.E interactive laboratory, which is the participatory component within the project. Chapter IV delves into the analysis of 12 video remixes produced at the *Remapping Europe – Remix*

Project creative ateliers in Spain, Poland, Turkey and the UK. Apart from the analysis of the featured videos and remix media works, the discussion presents a brief history of migration and overview of the mainstream media discourses on migration within each of the participating four countries. Furthermore, the aesthetic analysis of each media work is contextualised within comparable aesthetic approaches from a (media) art historical perspective. The exploration of the project *Remapping Europe* also includes analysis of the live-cinema performance *Eurovisions* staged by the artists collective the European Souvenirs. Chapter V studies the art investigative project *The Machine to Be Another* by introducing the discussion with an exploration of neuroscience research experiments on the generation of embodied empathy. Next, the interrelation between interface design and virtual empathy is studied within several of *The Machine's* scenarios of interaction, including a phenomenological account of the art project.

2. Transcultural imaginary as a model of European social imaginary

Today's European social reality has been driven by dynamics of globalization, migration and terror that foster a rigid segregation between Self and cultural Others. The rise of right-wing populism, ongoing violence and terror attacks, loss of empathy towards refugees and newcomers, the Brexit vote and expected wave of referenda across Europe, are the multiple twisted reflections of futile attempts for integration in European societies. The cultural dimensions of integrational strategies and potential peaceful coexistence are still dominated by national concepts and social constructs, which reproduce dynamics of exclusion instead of creating a space of mutual understanding. Mainstream media has constructed a European social imaginary which maintains stereotypes, prejudices and discursive hysteria towards the Other, while fear from the Other emerges as the mirror image of self-centred Europe. However, as Umberto Eco has put it: "The Third World is knocking at Europe's door, and it is coming in, whether Europe wants it to or not."³⁹ While Europe has become an immigration continent, it has failed in creating inclusive immigration policies and a new European narrative and European consciousness that subvert forms of discrimination and intolerance. With this regard, Kenan Malik recognizes that "immigration has become symbolic of the disruption of communities, the undermining of identities, the fraying of the sense of belonging, the promotion of unacceptable change"⁴⁰. Moreover, according to him, "Fortress Europe has created not only a physical barrier around the continent but an emotional one too – around Europe's sense of humanity,"⁴¹ which the ongoing refugee crisis has emphasized to a maximum extent. At the same time, "Islamophobia has become a kind of politically correct, respectable form of prejudice (...) a component of European popular culture"⁴² as Kai Hafez considers. Hafez also argues that cultural racism (racism 'without races' related to particular culture or religion) is not even recognized as racism and generally trivialized. In this sense, Bernd Reiter criticizes present Europe for being conceived not as a civic project, but rather an ethnic one:

³⁹ Umberto Eco, "An Uncontrollable Natural Phenomenon" in *Europe: Closed Doors or Open Arms?* EUNIC Yearbook 2014/15 (Goettingen: Steidl, 2015), 210.

⁴⁰ Kenan Malik, "Europe's Sense of Humanity" in *Europe: Closed Doors or Open Arms?* EUNIC Yearbook 2014/15 (Goettingen: Steidl, 2015), 41.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴² Kai Hafez, "Liberty, Equality and Intolerance." in *Europe: Closed Doors or Open Arms?* EUNIC Yearbook 2014/15 (Goettingen: Steidl, 2015), 31.

By defining belonging along ethnic lines and descent, it [Europe] also becomes a racial project in that it creates ‘race’ by excluding some people and forcing them into the category of excluded, disrespected, undesirable Others. So Europe is creating a racial project because ethnically defined nationalism has become the norm.⁴³

Meanwhile, the most severe criticism and failure of the European project – the British vote to leave the EU – is expected to reinforce re-nationalization of European politics. According to Ivan Krastev, the historical importance of UK’s decision is comparable only with the re-unification of Germany after the Cold War. However, “Brexit is German re-unification in reverse.”⁴⁴

The sketched out perspectives reveal the key role, which culture can play for re-building empathy, sense of belonging and cross-cultural understanding across Europe. While, mainstream immigration and social policies have favoured integration of the new coming Other (such as assimilation), but weak transformation of the welcoming Self, Europe needs to redefine its conception of integration as a twofold, dialogical and cross-cultural process. In this sense, Europe urgently needs the constitution of a shared semantic sphere – a social imaginary – which overcomes xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance, and rather fosters plurality, diversity and recognition of difference.

While multiculturalism has rather functioned as “plural monoculturalism”⁴⁵ as Amartya Sen has put it, the transcultural model offers a more viable solution for building a new European narrative and senses of belonging. It provides a shift towards creating an inclusive social imaginary – a transcultural imaginary – which allows for a dialogical and empathic relationship between Self and Other. Then, the urgently needed cultural integration in Europe should be reconceptualised as a transformative process of transculturation. As argued here, such transcultural dynamics has been initiated and exemplified eloquently by the work of European artists and creative makers, who have expressed concerns about Europe’s contemporary condition. Moreover, their work signifies the emergence of a common aesthetic language, which can be defined as transcultural aesthetics.

⁴³ Bernd Reiter, “A Pact with Democratic Society” in *Europe: Closed Doors or Open Arms?* EUNIC Yearbook 2014/15 (Goettingen: Steidl, 2015), 71.

⁴⁴ Ivan Krastev quoted in Boffoli, Christopher “Britain’s Out. Now What?” POLITICO 6/24/16 online: <http://www.politico.eu/article/britains-out-now-what-brexite-symposium-political-commentators-experts/> (accessed 1 July 2016)

⁴⁵ Amartya Sen, “The Uses and Abuses of Multiculturalism: Chili and Liberty” in *The New Republic* 02/27/ 06, 25-29, online: <http://www.pierretristam.com/Bobst/library/wf-58.htm> (accessed 1 August 2016)

Thus, the objective of this opening chapter is to outline the theoretical dimensions of the transcultural paradigm and to set out the conceptual background for the upcoming discussion on the constitution of transcultural aesthetics via creative practices of *trans-coding*, which will be further tackled in the following sections. The conceptual frameworks on transculturality will be later projected into the analysis of cross-cultural artistic expressions, mediated experiences and cinematic representations of transculturation that the discussed European creative initiatives involve.

The first sub-chapter aims to define the relationship between the concepts of transculturality and in-betweenness and to trace how far their meanings intersect within sociological approaches, postcolonial studies and postmodern debates. The next sub-section will position transculturality (as a cultural philosophy) in the context of cultural studies and will explore its theoretical dimensions. The third part of this chapter will address the constitution of a transcultural imaginary in terms of spatiality and ongoing potentiality for constant transformations in a non-hierarchical order. Consequently, theoretical views on global cultural flows and reverse dynamics will be under discussion. Next, transculturation will be considered as a modality of transcending inner and external cultural differences. Furthermore, this psychoanalytical understanding will serve as a basis for proposing that processes of transculturation could be achieved through somatic involvement with culture. The last part will concentrate on the relation between transcultural imaginary and cosmopolitan imagination and investigate how far they share similar socio-cultural dynamics. Finally, the chapter will argue that the transcultural model is relevant for comprehending contemporary European cultural processes and *mediascape*.

2.1 Transculturality and vectors of in-betweenness – defining the concepts

The concept of transculturality as a modality of understanding the other has been often defined as synonymous to notions of hybridity, cosmopolitan ethics and cultural syncretism. The various diapacons of understanding the term draw attention to the fact that the notions of “transculture,” “transculturalism” and “transculturality” have often been applied interchangeably in cultural discourse. Drawing certain distinctions between the different incarnations of the concept is necessary for understanding its connotative potential and contextual usage.

The authors of *Transcultural Experiments* (1999), Mikhail Epstein and Ellen Berry, trace the historical emergence of the notion “transculture” in the fields of sociology and anthropology and explore its contemporary uses in postmodern theory, postcolonial studies and the interdisciplinary sphere of cultural studies. As mentioned by them, the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz has been recognized as the first author who coined the term “transculturation,” which he used in 1940s to describe the hybridization and fusion of cultural elements within Afro-Cuban culture. Ortiz and his followers in Latin America emphasized the dynamic processual character of culture in comparison to Western understandings of “uni-cultures.” Referring to Diane Taylor’s article *Transculturating Transculturation* (1991), Epstein and Berry outline that this early usage of the concept concerned not only meaning, but also political positioning. It implicated the crossing of oppositional binaries, such as periphery and centre, and determined cultural identity as an unstable, dynamic and ongoing construction. According to Taylor, “the theory of transculturation (...) delineates the process by which symbols, discourse and ideology are transformed as one culture changes through the imposition or adoption of another and examines the historic and socio-political forces that produce local meanings.”⁴⁶

In this sense, by referring to Arjun Appadurai’s statement that any *culturalism* (usually attached to prefixes like bi-, inter-, multi-) “designates a feature of movements involving identities consciously in the making,”⁴⁷ it could be concluded that Ortiz agenda should be rather articulated in terms of “transculturalism.” *Culturalism*, according to Appadurai, represents identity politics of conscious mobilization of cultural differences at national or transnational level.⁴⁸ Following this train of thought, Donald Cuccioletta’s analysis of Fernando Ortiz’s work becomes viable as well. According to Cuccioletta, Ortiz’s transculturalism should be understood as a synthesis of two simultaneous phases – deculturalization of the past and a métissage with the present. Thus, reinventing a common culture is based on intermingling between different peoples and cultures. This defines one’s identity not as singular and one-dimensional (the self), but recognizes it as multiple, in rapport with the other.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Diane Taylor, “Transculturating Transculturation” in *Performing Arts Journal*, (May 1991), 91 quoted in Ellen E. Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein, *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 4.

⁴⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: The Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 15.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Donald Cuccioletta, “Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship” in *London Journal of Canadian Studies*, 2001/02 Vol. 17, 8.

Since 1970s the concept of transculture has become central in postcolonial contexts. For instance, Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) uses the term to describe the social space or the "contact zone" where a dominant and a subordinate culture meet, clash and interact.⁵⁰ Then, transculture can be also read as a *third culture* between asymmetrical power relations from feminist or postcolonial perspectives. The concept of the postcolonial has provided a conceptual repertoire to facilitate an understanding of processes of global transformation and transculturation.⁵¹ Furthermore, as Stuart Hall has written, the postcolonial perspective of perceiving the other "obliges us to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation destined to trouble the here/there cultural binaries forever."⁵² Moreover, the postcolonial perspective re-emerges as a relevant conceptual toolbox, since European societies are re-experiencing recurring processes of stigmatization, exclusion and othering. "Today, the same arguments that were once used against Jews and later against South Asians and Caribbean immigrants are now being aimed at Muslims and East Europeans"⁵³ as Kenan Malik points out.

In the framework of postcolonial studies it becomes relevant to consider Homi Bhabha's celebrated in the 1990's concepts developed in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Bhabha has introduced a dialogical model⁵⁴ that explains the production of *hybridity* along the clash of two cultures, in the interstice between discursive fields, and between cultural differences. In Bhabha's sense "difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*"⁵⁵ – a new entity, which is constantly shaping in between cultural contexts. Thus, new meanings, social relations and cultural identities are negotiated in a liminal, *in-between* space – a *third space*.⁵⁶ For Bhabha, "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity is the 'third space' which enables other positions to

⁵⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4.

⁵¹ Ann Brooks, "Reconceptualising Representation and Identity: Issues of Transculturalism and Transnationalism," in the *Intersection of Feminism and Cultural Sociology* in Tim Edwards (ed.), *Cultural Theory: Classical and Contemporary Positions* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications Ltd., 2007), 189.

⁵² Stuart Hall, "When was the 'post-colonial'?" Thinking at the limit," in I. Chambers and L. Curti (eds), *The Post-colonial Question* (London: Routledge, 1996), 247.

⁵³ Malik, Kenan. "Europe's Sense of Humanity" in *Europe: Closed Doors or Open Arms?* EUNIC Yearbook 2014/15 (Goettingen: Steidl, 2015), 44.

⁵⁴ Based on Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogical principle of culture.

⁵⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 219.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 36-9.

emerge.”⁵⁷ The ‘third space’ then resembles the ‘contact zone’ in Mary Louise Pratt’s terms.⁵⁸ It also functions as the realm where cultures not simply assemble into a bricolage, but transform each other and generate newness. Thus, as a recent study suggests, transculturality, as a cultural philosophy, can be understood in terms of a “constantly negotiated hybridity” – a formulation, which grasps well the dynamic nature of the transformative process of cultural mixes, permeations and networkings.⁵⁹

Recent uses of “transculture”, according to Berry and Epstein, are mostly related to the conditions of transnationalism, global communication, movement of multinational capital and the emergence of new subjectivities as response to global frameworks. Thus, transculturation can be also associated to “habits of thought, feeling, attachment, and belonging shaped by particular supranational or translocal collectivities,” and subjectivities based on mobility and communication, which constitute a cosmopolitan ideal. The ideal cosmopolitanism is then “predicated on development of a kind of global empathetic and ethical capacity to extend ourselves imaginatively in relation to cultural others” as Bruce Robbins has put it.⁶⁰ Regarding the potential political agenda of transculturation, transculturalism can be seen as a new form of humanism based on the recognition of the other within a culture of *métissage*. Furthermore, “this process of recognizing oneself in the other leads inevitably to a cosmopolitan citizenship.”⁶¹ Mobile and reciprocal interconnectedness as a basis for the development of transnational forms of citizenship, in extension of Benedict Anderson’s *imagined communities*, can be also conceptualized as multiple imaginary attachments to other cultures.⁶² As Kwame Anthony Appiah has suggested, cosmopolitanism is the

⁵⁷ Homi Bhabha, “The Third Space,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 211.

⁵⁸ The correspondence between ‘third space’ and ‘contact zone’ has been already established by Bill Ashcroft in his article “Caliban’s Voice: Writing in the Third Space,” in *Communicating in the Third Space*, ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhart Wagner (Routledge, 2008), 107-122.

⁵⁹ Cathy Covell Waegner, “Ethnic Transformations at School in North Rhine-Westphalia, Virginia, Pecs, and Autobiographical Novels – or Can Transcultural Impulses Serve/Save our Schoolchildren?,” in Cathy Covell Waegner et al. (eds.), *Transculturality and Perceptions of the Immigrant Other: “From-Heres” and “Come-Heres” in Virginia and North Rhine-Westphalia* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 109.

⁶⁰ Berry and Epstein quote Bruce Robbins’ definition of cosmopolitanism in the anthology *Cosmopolitic: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (eds.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 5-6.

⁶¹ Donald Cuccioletta, “Multiculturalism or Transculturalism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Citizenship” in *London Journal of Canadian Studies*, 2001/02 Vol. 17, 9.

⁶² Ellen E. Berry, “A Transcultural Imaginary,” in Ellen E. Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein, *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 172.

state of being engaged or “rooted”⁶³ in several cultures and communities. The interrelation between aspects of cosmopolitanism, cultural citizenship and Europeanization will be further explored in the third sub-chapter, which will reflect on the construction of European imaginary as a transcultural imaginary and will set the context for understanding the role of creative expressions in its constitution.

Correspondingly, Epstein’s and Berry’s own contribution to defining transculturality is tangible in accentuating the transformative potential of the concept, which becomes obvious within creative communication. Thus, they suggest that transculture should be understood in terms of (creative) experiment and interference (that has both deconstructive and productive character) – “it may be conceived both as a mode of existence or cognition on the borders of existing cultures in their overlapping potential spaces, and a mode of cultural productivity involving the dialogue and interference between representatives of various cultural traditions.”⁶⁴

A recent creative experiment, which expresses both a deconstructive and a productive character, is the documentary *Our Colonial Hangover* (2014) or *Zwart als Roet/Black as Soot* in original version, by the Dutch filmmaker Sunny Begman. Her artistic investigation is a stark critique on Zwarte Piet/Black Pete tradition that Dutch kids and society celebrate each December around Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas) eve. According to the ritual, Sinterklaas arrives from his hideout in Spain on a steamboat, being accompanied by a bunch of clownlike servant-helpers – the Black Petes. Sinteklaas rides above the rooftops, which Black Petes have to climb down in order to grant good kids with a present, put in a shoe left near the chimney. Each year Dutch citizens re-enact the tradition by dressing up as the funny, a little bit clumsy, dull-witted and speaking broken Dutch Sinterklaas’ black servant. The ones performing Zwarte Piet’s character put on a blackface make-up and red lipstick, a curly Afro wig, and wear Renaissance style attire, big earrings and the corresponding silly attitude. The all encompassing repertoire of the Black Pete experience economy involves black chocolate figures, kids’ toys and carnival outfits circulated on the market of discursive racism production.

While the Zwarte Piet custom is considered as intrinsic part of Dutch culture, it has stirred an international controversy and an appeal by the United Nations’

⁶³ Appiah defines cosmopolitanism as “rooted” in oppositions of theories suggesting that cosmopolitan attitude implies lack of communal or cultural affiliations.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

Committee on Racial Discrimination urging the Netherlands to reconsider its Black Pete Christmas celebration, because many see the tradition of white people wearing a blackface as a “vestige of slavery.” For instance, minorities with Surinamese, Antillean and African descent perceive this celebration as a legacy of colonial discrimination and racism.⁶⁵ The case has been surrounded by a number of civic actual and online protests, some raising the “Black Pete is racism” slogan, while others supporting the tradition as an innocent festivity for children and intangible cultural heritage. Amsterdam court’s decision in favour of the former position has been overturned by the Netherlands’ higher administrative court.

In this context, Sunny Bergman questions Dutch society’s renowned values of tolerance and inclusion. Her artistic intervention, involves her wearing blackface make-up and Black Pete costume herself within public spaces in London, such as Hyde Park. In this sense, she tests the racial connotations of this Dutch festivity within different social and cultural settings. Londoners meet her performance with perplexed and intense reactions, including a statement by the English comedian Russell Brand that Black Pete represents Dutch “colonial hangover.” The documentary deconstructs and reveals (unconscious) practices of everyday racism and evokes symbolic decolonization of a persistent Eurocentric social imaginary. In this sense, Bergman’s creative critique urges for dialogical coexistence and negotiation of cultural difference in the shape of transculturation between European Self and cultural Others. Thus, *Our Colonial Hangover*’s transformative potential provokes the emergence of inclusive European cultures and a transcultural European imaginary.



Fig. 1. Sunny Bergman, *Our Colonial Hangover* (colour, 55 min, DCP, 2014) Trailer:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBLBxb29maw>

⁶⁵ See also Aljazeera America. *Dutch Must End Black Pete Racial Stereotypes, UN race Bias Body Says in Aljazeera America* 28/08/15 online: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/28/dutch-must-end-black-pete-racial-stereotypes-un-body.html> (accessed 5 July 2016)

In conclusion, this dissertation supports an understanding of transculturality, which should be read not as a compilation of cultures (rather suitable for the multicultural idiom), but as the transformation of cultures (beyond the nation-state framework of reference) and the emergence of new cultural entities within cross-cultural and creative interaction. The following sub-chapter will theorize further the concept of transculturality by positioning it in the broader context of cultural studies.

2.2 Theoretical perspectives on transculturality

The authors of the recently published study *From Interculturalism to Transculturalism* (2010) identify an emerging shift towards the paradigm of transculturality within cultural studies. A conceptual translation from postcolonial studies is also sketched out. Furthermore, it can be argued that the transcultural epistemology has overcome the binarism of early postcolonial studies and presented the conceptual framework for understanding cultural differences and perceiving the other.⁶⁶ Thus, the transcultural paradigm emerges as a relevant conceptual framework for transgressing binary oppositions between Self and Other in today's European societies.

From a theoretical standpoint Mikhail Epstein positions transculture between two contradictory aspects that he envisages in the postmodernist paradigm – deconstruction and multiculturalism. With regard to Jacques Derrida's post-structuralist philosophy, deconstruction opens the possibility for constant reconstruction and redefinition of meaning and identities. Thus, cultural identity is not a matter of origin, but of constant reformulation of difference. In this sense, we can acknowledge “a lack of origin.” Contrarily, according to Epstein, multiculturalism plays with aspects of essentialism. This “internal paradox of postmodernity” between multiculturalism (stressing roots and collective identities) and deconstruction (stressing lack of origin and internal differences) is where transculture arises as a resolution between both. Simultaneously, it allows for recognition of the existing origins of cultures, since these are the basis for further transformation, and employs the “demystifying” power of deconstruction. In Epstein's view:

it is in this space of internal tension between multiculturalism and deconstruction, between origins and disorganization, where the transcultural movement evolves (...)

⁶⁶ See further Heinz Antor et al., *From Interculturalism to Transculturalism: Mediating Encounters in Cosmopolitan Contexts* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter GmbH, 2010).

for this purpose books, films and all sign systems are created: to dissolve the solidarity of one's nature, one's identity and to share the experience of "the other."⁶⁷

In this sense, Epstein suggests that transculture can be understood as the theory of *positive otherness*, which gives positive value to the experience of transcendence or the *othering of this world*. It is beyond a model of multiplicity of collective identities that can be tolerant but not interested in each other. Transculture, rather "proposes the model of inherently "multicultural" individuals capable of crossing the borders of collective identities."⁶⁸ Therefore, Epstein offers a reading of transculturality in opposition to multiculturalism, considering the latter as an emphasis on the significance of inborn differences as generators of identity construction. Contrarily, transculture implies that cultural development transforms one's identity by providing those characteristics that one lacks in one's original, natural state. Considering Stuart Hall's extensive work on cultural identity (which will be further studied in the second chapter), Epstein's position could be complemented with the statement that transcultural identity is not simply a matter of "being", but mostly of "becoming."⁶⁹

Moreover, by articulating further Bhabha's theory of liminality and hybridity, Epstein conceptualizes transculturality as the difference in identity shaping, which is the state of being different not only from others, but also from one's own self. This envisages that one can liberate oneself from dependence from the native culture and therefore experience the freedom to perform the other cultures that one has acquired. According to Epstein, from a 'culturological' angle this would mean that one can be a representative of other cultures within one's native culture and also one could represent one's native culture within the others. Therefore, participation in several cultures, some of which might originally exclude one another, could be seen as the essence of transcultural existence. A step further, Epstein conceptualizes the state of being different from one's own self, not only from others, as the starting point for cultural integration.⁷⁰ With this regard, Epstein's thesis can be translated into a conceptual model for building cross-cultural understanding and cultural integration in Europe.

⁶⁷ Mikhail Epstein, "Transculture in the Context of Contemporary Critical Theories," in Ellen E. Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein, *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 84.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶⁹ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222-3.

⁷⁰ Mikhail Epstein, "Culture – Culturology – Transculture," in *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 280-306.

Similarly, Tzvetan Todorov's thesis on plurality and difference entails that Europe's cultural identity "does not lead to wiping out particular cultures and local memories. It consists not in a list of proper names, nor in a repertory of general ideas, but in the adoption of one common attitude in the face of diversity."⁷¹ Cultural integration, then, becomes a transformative process of transculturation between Self and Other, which can render Europe as a space of transcultural existence.

Recognizing Epstein's contribution, it should be noted that Wolfgang Welsch is also among the central proponents of the transcultural discourse. Welsch's idea of "the puzzling form of cultures today" has emerged by opposing variables to the established terms of multiculturalism and interculturalism. Departing from Theodor Adorno's perception that cultures should be studied beyond the traditional duality of foreignness and ownness – "beyond both the heterogeneous and the own," Welsch argues that transculturality is the relevant model for understanding contemporary culture.⁷²

According to Welsch the concept of interculturality reflects the ways in which cultures may interact with one another. However, he discovers the deficiency of this concept in the fact that cultures are still perceived as separate spheres, which indicates a structural inability for effective communication between these cultures and rather generates intercultural conflicts. Welsch has similar objections to multiculturalism: although it recognizes the existence of different cultures together in one society/community/state, it still proceeds from the idea of clearly distinguished homogenous self-contained cultures. Furthermore, multiculturalism even strengthens barriers between cultures. Reflecting further on interculturality and multiculturalism, he claims that both concepts signify rigid boundaries between cultures – even if information has been exchanged through the boundaries, no change takes place as a result.⁷³ His idea considers the internal complexities and dynamics of every culture, as well as recognizes the degree to which cultures are becoming inseparably linked with one another and characterized by *hybridization*: "for every culture, all *other* cultures have tendentially come to be inner-content or satellites."⁷⁴ This happens due to intensified migratory processes, global systems of communication and economic cooperation. Thus, categories, boundaries, and concrete distinctions such as "foreign"

⁷¹ Tzvetan Todorov, "European Identity" (tr. Nathan Bracher) in *South Central Review* John Hopkins University Press 25.3 (Fall 2008) 3-15, 7.

⁷² Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 194.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

and “familiar” are becoming irrelevant. Welsch argues that cultures actually no longer have the features of homogeneity and separateness:

They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called *transcultural* insofar that it *passes through* classical cultural boundaries. Cultural conditions today are largely characterized by mixes and permeations. The concept of transculturality (...) seeks to articulate this altered cultural constitution (...). Lifestyles and identities are no longer limited to nationally based cultures (...). Work on one’s identity is becoming more and more work on the integration of components of differing cultural origins.⁷⁵

At the same time transculturality should not be understood as the unification of cultures: “it is, rather, intrinsically linked with the production of diversity.”⁷⁶ A high degree of cultural variety exists just like in traditional single cultures. However, the differences are no longer articulated through a juxtaposition of clearly outlined cultures, but result between transcultural networks. These have both common and diverse aspects – showing overlaps and distinctions simultaneously. The process we are witnessing is a process of coexisting unification and differentiation.⁷⁷

Welsch goes further, claiming that transculturality encompasses globalization (in terms of universalization) and fragmentation, being able to cover both the global and the local. Therefore, it can be assumed that Welsch understands transculturality as similar to glocalization – in the way it has been studied by Roland Robertson as a dynamic model between global and local tensions, which has replaced pre-existing debates on universalism and particularism.⁷⁸ It can be further suggested that an alternative reading of glocalization as a process of transculturation and vice versa can be mapped in the third space, in between global and local dynamics.

In this sense, European culture should be understood as a dialogical process of transculturation between local and global cultural flows. Global influences and Europe’s traditional oppositional others, such as American culture, Asian culture, Islamic culture, are becoming intrinsic impulses of European culture and social imaginary. In this direction, the following sub-chapter will reflect further on the conceptual dimensions of

⁷⁵ Ibid., 197-8.

⁷⁶ Wolfgang Welsch, “Going global or transcultural?” in *The Contemporary Study of Culture*, Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft u. Verkehr und Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften (Wien: Turia + Kant, 1999), 205.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Victor Roudometof and Ronald Robertson, “The Space between the Boundaries: Globalization and Americanization,” in *American Culture in Europe: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mike-Frank G. Eptropoulos and Victor Roudometof (Westport: Praeger, 1998), 187.

the notion of transcultural imaginary and its relationship with spatiality, cultural globalization and subjectivity.

2.3 On the construction of transcultural imaginary

The following section will contextualise the concept of transculturality within the broader discourse on globalization. The sub-chapter will revisit existing ideas and introduce additional aspects in understanding the constitution of *transcultural imaginary*. The discussion will engage the notions of spatiality, global flows, cosmopolitan imagination and *social imaginary* (drawing broadly upon theories by Cornelius Castoriadis, Charles Taylor, Jacques Lacan and Benedict Anderson) and will examine their interconnections. Furthermore, a relationship between the phenomenon of glocalization and processes of cross-cultural exchange of globally travelling signs and their recontextualiation in different localities will be established. Thus, the reflections on transculturality in European creative projects, as the scope of the final chapter, will be initially envisaged on a larger scale.

2.3.1 The place and the space of (trans-)culture

The ‘spatial turn’ in cultural studies evokes a reading of the geopolitical European territory that involves the symbolic and the experiential dimensions related to the physical place. It also implies a perspective towards Europe, which considers a redefined time-space relationship in the process of globalization: if modernity can be articulated through time-based historicism, globalization is the *epoch of space*, the *epoch of simultaneity* as Michel Foucault has stated.⁷⁹ In their study on globalization and *glocalization* Roland Robertson and Victor Roudometof point out that this reformulated time-space relationship is intrinsic for the construction of identity.⁸⁰ Moreover, the authors of the *reflexive modernity* such as Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens have extensively elaborated on the effect of globalization upon the time-space correlation and how it has transformed identity into unstable, unfixed, fragmented, ambiguous and *liquid* entity, which is constantly in a process of

⁷⁹ Michel Foucault. “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1986), 22-27, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0300-7162%28198621%2916%3A1%3C22%3AOOS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-F> (accessed 12 December 2014).

⁸⁰ Victor Roudometof and Ronald Robertson, “The Space between the Boundaries: Globalization and Americanization,” 185-6.

becoming; or, as Bauman remarks – to talk about the problem of identity is to “assert a pleonasm, since identity can exist only as a problem.”⁸¹ The assumption, that subjectivity and cultural identity are never complete and in a state of becoming, is the beginning of a transcultural model.⁸²

In exploring further the link between globalization, subjectivity and space, Robertson and Roudometof borrow the concept of *social space* coined by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1991) and later projected into Edward Soja’s perception of the *thirdspace*. The *social space* is a “dialectically linked triad of sociospatial configurations” including the *perceived*, the *conceived* and the *lived* space. The perceived space coincides with the empirical space of human interactions. The conceived space concerns the representations of space, where ideological, political and cultural conflicts take place. The lived space is the space of representation, which is “inhabited and used by cultural producers, where innovation and imagination can provide the terrain for changing power relations within the other two spaces.”⁸³ The lived space can be perceived as the environment of artistic and creative processes, since it can involve complex symbolisms, non-verbal and subliminal expressions. The spaces of representation are also the terrain for the generation of “counterspaces,” spaces of resistance to the dominant order that emerge from their subordinate, peripheral and marginalized positioning.⁸⁴ Central for Lefebvre is the transcendence of all spaces within the *social space* and the blurring of the dialectics between conceived and lived space – the material world and our thoughts about it.

Edward Soja has expanded Lefebvre’s fusion between the “real” and the “imagined” space into a critical strategy of *thirthing-as-othering* that goes beyond a dialectical synthesis. One aspect of his strategy builds on breaking the binarism between “a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the “real” material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through “imagined” representations of spatiality.”⁸⁵ Then the *thirdspace* can be interpreted as a *real-and-imagined* entity, which encompasses the interrelated notions of “place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography” and establishes connections

⁸¹ Zygmunt Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity,” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 18-19.

⁸² Ellen E. Berry, “Nomadic Desires and Transcultural Becomings” in *Transcultural Experiments*, 134.

⁸³ Roudometof and Robertson, “The Space between the Boundaries: Globalization and Americanization,” 183.

⁸⁴ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell 1996), 67.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 4.

between the representational strategies of real and imagined places.⁸⁶ Therefore, this research project has chosen to approach Europe as a *real-and-imagined* entity, which is creatively (re)constructed via artistic practices and expressions.

In the context of the controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, the author was asked why he had chosen to remain in Britain despite his criticism of racism and class control that he recognized in British society. Rushdie replied that it was because he felt connected to "another Britain" – the Britain of Blake, Shelley, Orwell, C.L.R. James, Ken Loach, the Beatles, the Clash, etc.⁸⁷ Correspondingly, Chris Rojek offers an extension of Rushdie's concept into "another America" or "another Australia" and connects the idea of "another" culture to Charles Taylor's conception of the *social imaginary*.⁸⁸ While being critical towards its utopian dimensions, which undermine political structures and economic power, Rojek still recognizes that "the arts, in which the cultural imaginary perhaps achieves its most profound expression, constitute a cultural universal with the capacity to dissolve the many divisions and frictions of religion, race, ethnicity and politics."⁸⁹

This view directs us once again towards the definition of the *lived* space – "inhabited and used by cultural producers, where innovation and imagination can provide the terrain for changing power relations within the other two spaces."⁹⁰ Similarly, the dimensions of an ideal space of cultural interaction and transformation, or "another Europe," can be outlined. This cultural construction seems most tangible in the *lived* space of artistic expression, where cultural codes, themes and repertoires transcend beyond cultural boundaries and constitute a collective imaginary.

To a certain degree Soja's *trialectics* of space as *real-and-imagined* entity resonates with Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum.⁹¹ *Simulacra and Simulation* (1995) opens with a reference to Jorge Luis Borges' fable about the map which was created so detailed by its cartographers that it covered the mapped territory completely

⁸⁶ Edward W. Soja, "Thirdspace: Towards a New Consciousness of Space and Spatiality," in *Communicating in the Third Space*, ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhart Wagner (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 50.

⁸⁷ Chris Rojek recalls the famous controversy surrounding the author being a target of 1989 fatwa (calling for Rushdie to be murdered). A worldwide Muslim protest rose against Rushdie and his novel, since it carries religious elements which were interpreted as offensive towards Islam.

⁸⁸ Chris Rojek, *Cultural Studies* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2007), 26.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 158-9.

⁹⁰ Roudometof and Robertson, *The Space between the Boundaries*, 183.

⁹¹ Henri Lefebvre along with Roland Barthes is an early influence in Baudrillard's social semiology of mass media and consumer society.

and in the course of its aging it could be confused with the real.⁹² Contemporary postmodern society, according to Baudrillard, is not one of copy and original, since the reference to the real cannot be traced back – the real already exists in terms of its mediated representation. The distinction between reality and representation disappears, as the real is already a sign – a hyperreal.⁹³

From another perspective, Soja's "critical spatial imagination,"⁹⁴ as he explores, directs to Homi Bhabha's notion of the third space. Then *thirthing-as-othering* allows for a critical "other-than" choice that speaks through its otherness. Soja also turns to Borges (who has become intellectually unavoidable in postmodern rhetoric) and employs the evocation of the Aleph as "one of the points in space that contains all other points." Thus, he conveys the re-combinational openness and the continuous potential for critical exchange and multiplicity of perspectives where issues can be addressed without privileging one over the other:

the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle (...) everything comes together in the thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, discipline and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history.⁹⁵

Moreover, as this sub-chapter has argued, it can be concluded that this cubist-like multiplicity of perspectives, expressed through the metaphor of Aleph, is intrinsic for the transcultural model.

House of Eutopia (2006-2013) is an art installation by the Belgian artist and architect Filip Berte, which plays with perceptions of European place and space. Berte's work aims to reconstruct the historical, geographical, political and social margins of Europe. The installation has been continuously under construction at CAMPO Arts Centre in Ghent, Belgium between 2006 and 2013. *House of Eutopia* is a sculptural work – a three-dimensional recreation of a house, composed of five rooms. Each room is built separately, which allows for being set up and exhibited at external for Belgium locations. Thus, parts from the installation have been shown in Berlin, Prague, Poznan and Utrecht. Each room is arranged as an installation itself, exploring a certain theme of Europe's complex social reality and providing a view on Europe as a whole. In this

⁹² Based upon Lewis Carroll's story about a fictional map in scale 1:1.

⁹³ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 3.

⁹⁴ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 56-7.

sense, Filip Berte follows the *Gesamtkunstwerk* principle⁹⁶, which according to Bauhaus School means that a building's overall architecture cannot be separated from its internal design, arts and crafts, that should reflect and correspond to the whole. In each room *House of Eutopia* sets out a specific situation in order to confront visitors with the boundaries of European place, in relative and absolute terms. Each room-installation is released via a variety of mediums such as film, photos, paintings, and object-based elements such as scale-models and viewing boxes. Thus, spectators are offered multiple angles and media for regarding and experiencing Europe.⁹⁷

The first room, built at the initiation of the project in 2006, is entitled *Protected Landscape*, constructed at the House's ground floor. The visitors follow a route through archetypal landscapes, symbolising the themes of migration, protection and control of Europe's outer and internal borders, asylum policy and the process of European integration.⁹⁸ The second room (in the House's cellar), is built under the name *Collective Memory Mass Grave*. It is composed of viewing boxes with projections of natural and urban landscapes and sites, which have been harmed in the past. Thus, the installation provokes reflections on the social construction of memories, myths and European history. The third room – *The Graveyard* – reflects on Europe's geographic boundaries and the social margins that define certain communities as outsiders. Berte has travelled across four cities – Tbilisi (Georgia), Chişinău (Moldova), Melilla (Spanish enclave in Morocco) and Brussels – in order to shoot four films, which observe migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and homeless people. The third room is divided into four screening spaces for showing each film. *The Blue Room* is the fourth room, which shifts from Europe's 'peripheries' to the 'centre.' The installation was set up in Berlin, where Berte moved the Eutopia project in 2012. The walls of the room are covered with all encompassing canvas, revealing portraits of European citizens. This room, set up on the first floor of the House, aims to function also as a mirror image of European population and evoke reflections on European citizenship. *White Space/Mirror* is the title of the fifth installation, positioned under the roof of *House of Eutopia*. It is situated in diametrical opposition with the cellar, both in terms of spatial as well as conceptual dimensions. While the cellar represents Europe's dark past, the

⁹⁶ *Gesamtkunstwerk* can be understood as a comprehensive artwork composed of all other art forms. Early uses of the term, around 1950's, appear in essays by Richard Wagner as an explanation of his opera compositions and aesthetics. Later, the term has been adopted by architecture in order to explain the architectural principle of totality and harmony between landscape, building structure, interior and design.

⁹⁷ See also <http://www.eutopia.be/about-house-of-eutopia>

⁹⁸ See also Protected Landscape <http://www.eutopia.be/landscape>

attic offers a light open space, where visitors can share utopian views about Europe's future. Thus, Berte re-imagines Europe as a dialogical space without boundaries. Moreover, according to him "architecture can transfer knowledge that can act as a medium to evoke empathy in the spectator."⁹⁹ Building a house is a gradual process, which can be used as metaphor for building the European project. *House of Eutopia* recreates Europe as a third *real-and-imagined* entity, which is constantly in a process. The offered by Berte trajectory between past and future, geography and history, social and political constructs, not only signifies that Europe is a project under construction. It also reveals the active role that citizens should play in building Europe's future, which the final *White Space/Mirror* room emphasizes. Furthermore, walking down multiple routes and obtaining different viewpoints towards Europe that the installation offers to its visitors, conceptually resembles the multiplicity of perspectives intrinsic for the transcultural paradigm, which as earlier argued can be understood via the metaphor of Aleph. Thus, by provoking the spatial imagination of viewers *House of Eutopia* aims to create a *thirdspace* of interaction, and potentially transculturation that can be understood as an ideal model of European space and existence.

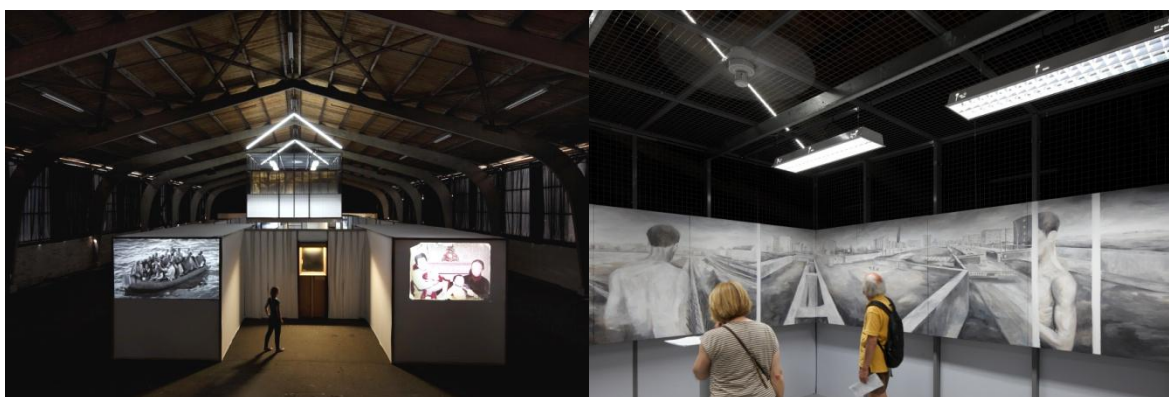


Fig. 2. Filip Berte, *House of Eutopia* (2006-2013) <http://www.eutopia.be/about-house-of-eutopia>

2.3.2 The construction of social imaginary – a process of transculturation between global cultural flows and reverse flows

In the context of imaginative interaction between micro- and macro- cultural flows, Arjun Appadurai's work on *the imagination as a social practice* in a global order should be taken into consideration. In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of*

⁹⁹ Berte, Filip, *House of Eutopia* <http://www.eutopia.be/about-house-of-eutopia>

Globalization (1996) Appadurai analyses the production of transnational *social imaginary*, constituted by a number of overlapping global cultural flows that he conceptualizes as *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes* and *ideoscapes*. These ‘scapes’ capture the fluid and circuitous nature of signs, images, goods and human populations across the globe. Appadurai deals with media and migration as major diacritics for building a theory of cultural globalization where “moving images meet deterritorialized viewers.”¹⁰⁰ The joint force of electronic mediation and mass migration “is explicitly transnational – even postnational.”¹⁰¹ The *mediascapes*, as the central terrain of this paper, refer to global production and distribution of media contents and the provision of a “large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed.”¹⁰² Media transformations offer the constitution of imagined selves and imagined worlds. Furthermore, their interconnectedness with migratory process frames the imagination as a constitutive feature of subjectivity. From the one hand, media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project. On the other hand, the imagination has become a collective social fact, which is the basis for the plurality of imagined worlds. The imagination, according to Appadurai is an active and transformative potential, which is central to all forms of agency, since they can symbolically rework the projection of dominant cultures. Potentially new imagined communities and narratives of global cultural identity or “experiments in self-making” can be achieved. Thus, through the role of the imagination Appadurai presents counterarguments to theories describing globalization as homogenization or Americanization. Globalization can be understood even as a *localizing* process which implies that socio-cultural processes can be studied *translocally*.¹⁰³ Appadurai’s thesis becomes relevant for understanding European cultural dynamics and social imaginary, also in terms of a mediascape, composed of global and local cultural flows.

Interrogating the Americanization thesis through studying the dynamic relationship between the global and the local is also the central motive in Roland Robertson’s conceptualization of glocalization, which is “the simultaneous adaptation of cultural items in different locales via the appropriation and production of local

¹⁰⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 17, 192.

practices and traditions”.¹⁰⁴ Taking into consideration Cornelius Castoriadis’ argument that American capitalism involves colonization of the *social imaginary*, Robertson still insists that local cultures filter, appropriate and recontextualize global influences according to their own frame of reference: “in this process, cultural heterogeneity is reconstructed via cultural syncretism.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, debates on global homogenization and cultural imperialism can be revisited through the process of glocalization, whose central feature is “the proliferation of difference.”¹⁰⁶ Hence, as it was already suggested in the previous sub-chapter the dynamics of glocalization can be interpreted as a process of transculturation between the global and the local.

Another author who has targeted the interdependence between globalised cultural repertoires and their local interpretations is Rob Kroes, whose main work focuses on American culture and its transformations in non-American and specifically European context. Identifying America as a semiotic centre providing ingredients of which our collective imagination is composed, he defines American cultural repertoires as “free-floating signifiers” that can be “resemantised” and “recontextualized” by local practices. As Kroes claims: “not only have we cracked American cultural codes and can read them flawlessly, we have also appropriated those codes. They have become part of our collective imaginary repertoire.”¹⁰⁷

Thus, Kroes’ perspective could be rephrased as a process of glocalization. Theoretical views that frame Americanization as homogenizing force of cultural imperialism *per se* can be contested by his theory of freedom of reception at the receiving end. Moreover, Kroes’ thesis could be understood as a theory of active audience reception and *trans-coding* (to be further addressed in the following chapter) that emphasizes processes of transculturation and the constitution of transcultural aesthetics.

In a similar direction, Ellen Berry considers transculturality as a realm among “what is actually happening in the globalized postmodern world, what is emerging as potential, and what might become.”¹⁰⁸ This potentiality for transformation is envisaged in the intersection of materiality, representation and imagination that Soja’s thirdspace encompasses and that Ellen Berry relates to the concept of *transcultural imaginary*,

¹⁰⁴ Roudometoff and Robertson, “The Space between the Boundaries: Globalization and Americanization,” 187.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 189.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 190.

¹⁰⁷ Rob Kroes, “American Empire and Cultural Imperialism: A View from the Receiving End,” in Thomas Bender (ed.) *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 305-6.

¹⁰⁸ Ellen E. Berry, “Nomadic Desires and Transcultural Becomings” in *Transcultural Experiments*, 135.

which emphasizes the creative power of the imaginary as a generator of cultural improvisation and recombination. According to Berry, the transcultural imaginary relates to a hypothetical or virtual space containing all existing cultures in their “discreteness from one another, but also in their actual and potential overlappings, merging, interferences, becomings, and resulting new mutations.”¹⁰⁹ Then, the transcultural imaginary should be understood as an ongoing cultural potentiality, which is never complete and fully realizable. The infinite combinations of cultural forms and flows resemble Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s philosophy of the rhizome since it envisages that “cultural materials are not defined by abiding identity persisting over time, but by the capacity to undergo constant transformations, permutations and realignments.”¹¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari have suggested the rhizomatic model, in opposition to a root-tree model,¹¹¹ in order to conceptualize multiplicity of transconnections in a non-hierarchical system. The vertical root-tree system, according to them, entails essentialism and enforces binaries, such as centre/periphery. The rhizome, contrarily, has no exact centre or unique point of genesis, but a diversity of interconnected nodes. It “has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*.”¹¹²

Furthermore, Berry’s observation could be expanded into the statement that imaginative transculturation is rhizomatic *per se*, since it does not structure cultural influences in a hierarchical order, but functions as a network of multiple cultural impulses. Then we deal with not a single cultural origin, but with interconnectedness between multiple cultural “roots” (in terms of Appiah’s cosmopolitanism) that generate constant cultural transformations and multiple imaginary attachments.

In Pace with Time (Disruptive Creation, 2011) is a graffiti intervention carried out in Sofia, which has stirred a series of controversies in Bulgaria and internationally since 2011. Since then its multiple (medium) incarnations have also triggered the interest of international news media, street art fora and debates on creativity and Post-Communist cultural heritage from Eastern Europe. In June 2011 Sofia woke up to discover the Monument of the Soviet Army repainted into a superhero mash-up featuring Superman, Ronald McDonald, Captain America, Santa Claus, the Joker and

¹⁰⁹ Ellen E. Berry, “A Transcultural Imaginary” in *Transcultural Experiments*, 170.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Borrowed from botany, the rhizome is a horizontal stem structure with multiple nodes and roots, not a vertical root-tree model.

¹¹² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London and New York: Continuum, (1980) 2004), 26.

Wonder Woman, courageously waving the American flag – over painted on its USSR bronze sculpt. A caption below the heroic group composition was hand written in Bulgarian language and stating “keep in step with the times.” The anonymous at that point artists were nicknamed ‘the Bulgarian Banksy’ by news media outlets in the country and abroad. Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, Russia’s Foreign Ministry and pro-Russian circles declared the graffiti intervention as a pure form of vandalism. The controversy surrounding the monument and whether it should be preserved as part of Bulgaria’s cultural memory and Sofia’s urban landscape exists before the actual street art action. Erected in 1954 it commemorated the decennial anniversary of the liberation of Bulgarian people from fascism with the help of the Soviet Army. Since Bulgarian government had allied with Germany in World War II, the historical discourses on Soviet Union occupation have shifted between ‘liberation’ and ‘forced invasion,’ the latter being favoured after the collapse of Communism in 1989. Locked in this dichotomy, Bulgaria’s historical amnesia has payed little respect to Bulgarian anti-fascist resistance movements, active during the WWII before joining the Communist Party in 1944. Thus, the Soviet Army monument still occupies an unresolved politico-historical, socio-cultural and ethical context.

Certainly, however, *In Pace with Time* transformation of the Red Army soldiers into Western pop culture heroes, expresses a critique on Bulgaria’s weak political self-identity and socio-cultural environment driven historically by pro-Russian and later by pro-American interests and incentives. The resemantization of American pop icons (defined as free-floating signifiers by Rob Kroes) is indeed a creative gesture borrowed from Banksy’s early work. For instance, his famous stencil *Napalm* (2004) employs the characters of Mickey Mouse and Ronald McDonald, who happily hold the hands of a terrified naked girl – a well-known photographic image taken during the napalm bombings in Vietnam in 1972. Thus, by recontextualizing popular symbols of capitalism and consumerism, Banksy creates a satirical picture, which criticizes US foreign policy and the commodification of war itself. In a similar manner, *In Pace with Time* attempts to establish a critical stance via combining global and local cultural flows. Moreover, the initial art intervention has been later reinvented in multiple *rhizomatic* variations. In 2014 the Red Army figures were coloured in pink marked with the caption “Bulgaria apologizes” written in Czech. The action was released on the anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and the crush of the Prague Spring in 1968 with the participation of Bulgarian, Polish and Hungarian troops. The

pink colour was a reference and homage to the 1991 action of the Czech artist David Cerny, who painted the Monument of Soviet Tank Crews in central Prague in pink. In 2014 during the Ukrainian crisis, the monument underwent a Ukrainian twist by repainting the main figure, the soldier Aliosha, into yellow and blue (Ukraine's flag colours). The graffiti intervention from 2011 became the subject also of multiple intermedial references and transformations. Among them are a 3D mapping animation of the monument, a short documentary directed by Anton Partalev that features the anonymous artists from Destructive Creation collective, and multiple stage performances and re-enactments of the *new* heroes' composition. Thus, *In Pace with Time* exemplifies the *rhizomatic* potentiality for countless improvisation and recombination generated between multiple cultural flows.



Fig. 3. Destructive Creation, *In Pace with Time* (since 2011) street art intervention
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26346901>

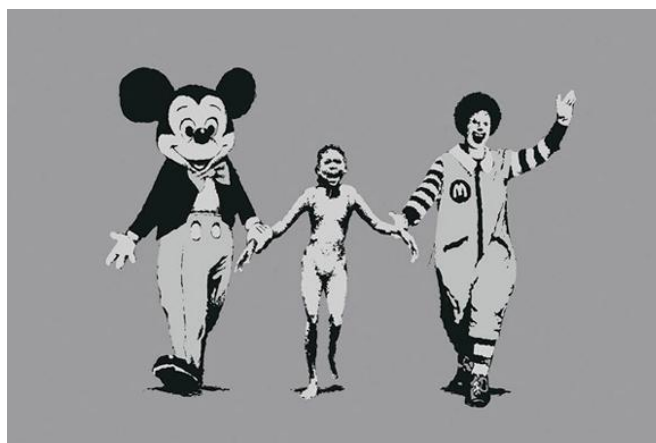


Fig. 4. Banksy, *Napalm* (2004)

<http://www.stencilrevolution.com/banksy-art-prints/ronald-mcdonald-and-mickey-mouse/>

2.3.3 The interconnections between transcultural imaginary, cultural citizenship and cosmopolitan imagination

As it has been cued earlier in the sub-chapter, the constitution of the transcultural imaginary intersects with understandings of cosmopolitan ethics and existence. Therefore, dimensions of cosmopolitanism that interrelate with transcultural spaces and modes of communication can be outlined. Furthermore, the notions of cultural citizenship and cosmopolitan imagination can be considered as conceptually linked to the constitution of transcultural imaginary and *social imaginary* in terms of Benedict Anderson's *imagined communities*. They can be also addressed as standpoints on exploring European cultural processes.

Nick Stevenson has written on culture and citizenship from the perspective of cultural sociology, rather than political theory. Thus, his main concerns deal with cultural rights, inclusion and access to cultural resources, identity and cultural belonging as discursive constructs. Stevenson defines cultural citizenship as the fulfilled extent to which “society makes commonly available the semiotic material cultures necessary in order to make social life meaningful, critique practices of domination, and to allow for the recognition of difference under conditions of tolerance and mutual respect.”¹¹³

His view frames the major role of media culture and communication in the construction of cultural cosmopolitanism, often discussed in terms of globalization and difference (according to him). Globalization, however, if reduced to flows of economic

¹¹³ Nick Stevenson, “Globalization, National Cultures and Cultural Citizenship,” in *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1. (Blackwell, Winter 1997), 42. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4121265>

capital and practices of consumption will entail an understanding of cosmopolitanism in terms of commercial cosmopolitanism.¹¹⁴ Such form of cosmopolitan existence may not trigger critical forms of subjectivity. Therefore, the notion of citizenship appears as central for understanding the active role of the global publics. Since audiences contribute significantly to what Stevenson names cultural citizenship, his theory can be further related to approaches on media induced social participation, such as Manuel Castells' study on the network society and Henry Jenkins' theory of participatory culture, whose work will be explored within the scope of the upcoming chapter.

Following Habermas' remark that the maintenance of specifically national public spheres within a global culture has an increased rather than a diminished significance, Stevenson encourages the maintenance of overlapping and interconnected public spheres simultaneously at the level of the local, the national and the global. He considers that these overlapping public spheres can provide the "symbolic and material cultures necessary for the operation of cultural citizenship."¹¹⁵

Reflecting further on Stevenson's thesis and the concept of cultural citizenship, Gerard Delanty has expressed similar views on cosmopolitanism and the role of the public. Cosmopolitan citizenship, as he prefers to rename the term, shifts the focus of citizenship on common experiences, learning processes and discourses of empowerment. What Delanty highlights as central is the "*learning* dimension of citizenship as a *constructivist* process." Therefore, as suggested by Stevenson's work, it can be argued that citizens can learn citizenship through critical engagement in the informal context of everyday life. Citizenship then is not entirely about rights, but also about habits of participation in political community, which can be taught. It concerns learning about the potential for action and responsibility and the relationship of the self with the other: "it is a learning process (...) articulated in perceptions of the self as an active agency and a social actor shaped by relations with others."¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Delanty considers that:

one of the most important dimensions of citizenship concerns the styles and forms of language, cultural models, narratives, discourses that people use to make sense of their society, interpret their place in it, construct courses of action and thereby give rise to new demands for rights, which we may call cultural rights.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 56.

¹¹⁶ Gerard Delanty, "Two Conceptions of Cultural Citizenship: A Review of Recent Literature on Culture and Citizenship," in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (London School of Economics and Political Science, March 2002), 64-5.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 66.

Thus, the learning dimensions of citizenship should be also regarded as a medium of social construction, where the process of individual learning is translated into collective learning and ultimately becomes realized into social institutions.¹¹⁸ Expanding on this position the last chapter will regard artistic projects and their learning capacity for developing the cultural practices of deliberation and democratic participation.

This reflexive potential of cosmopolitan citizenship has been further articulated by Delanty as *critical cosmopolitanism*, within which the cosmopolitan imagination occurs when new relationships between self, other and world are shaped in moments of openness. This suggests a reading of cosmopolitanism that is oriented towards internal developmental process in the social world, rather than as a normative political account focused on transnational and postnational phenomena or understandings in terms of universalistic global culture. As Delanty writes:

The cosmopolitan imagination is articulated in framing processes and cultural models by which the social world is constituted; it is therefore not reducible to concrete identities, but should be understood as a form of cultural contestation in which the logic of translation plays a central role.¹¹⁹

Since critical cosmopolitanism is both reflexive and relational it can be understood as the constitution of a social world in which the self and the other are enunciated in self-problematizing modes within discursive processes, thus both undergo transformations. In this context, the world (that Delanty suggests also as a point of reference besides the cultural categories of self and other) should be seen as openness for transformation, not as a universal system. The cosmopolitan space is the space of translation of difference. Such translatability can be traced between local and global, core and periphery, particular and universal, self and other, past and present; without the dimension of “self-transcendence, cosmopolitanism is a meaningless term.”¹²⁰ Therefore, the cosmopolitan imagination is not synonymous to the mere condition of pluralism, but concerns openness and transformation. From this stance, it can be assumed that the cosmopolitan imagination and the transcultural imaginary share similar socio-cultural dynamics.

Furthermore, Delanty is one of the authors, such as Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, who consider Europeanization as one of the most relevant examples of

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Gerard Delanty, “The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory,” in *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 57, No. 1(2006), 25.

¹²⁰ Ibid.,43.

cosmopolitanism. European social space entails horizontal interrelations between European societies, vertical links between European societies and the EU, and transversal connections between European societies and the global, and also between the EU and the global. Then, the resulting cosmopolitanism is more than co-existence of difference.¹²¹ This relational and transformative nature of cosmopolitanism would also imply that “a cosmopolitan European identity can be seen less as a new supra identity rather than as a growing reflexivity within existing identities, including personal, national and supranational identities, as well as other kinds of identities.”¹²²

Similarly, the transcultural model offers such inclusive understanding of identity and its processual and transformative character. Expanding Delanty’s thesis that “Europe can be seen as a discursive strategy which is articulated by shifting signifiers in relational contexts”¹²³, it can be suggested that the transcultural model can serve as a conceptual framework for building a new European narrative, which is interrelated with the constitution of a new European social imaginary. A transcultural European imaginary implies also that cross-cultural attachments are shaped not in a ‘top-down’ technocratic manner, but in a ‘bottom-up’ democratic way. In this, sense citizens’ cultural and creative participation play a central role, both as forms of cultural citizenship and a constructivist process, which educates practices of deliberation.

In the recent years, a range of pan-European initiatives have opened the space for community art and citizens’ participation. For instance, *The Green Screen Diaries* (2015) is a transnational participatory and transmedia project (using different media platforms), which involves citizens in the construction of a shared European imaginary. It was released within the framework of Transeuropa Festival 2015, which took place in Belgrade, Serbia in October 2015. Transeuropa Festival is a biannual event on arts, culture and politics, whose main objective is to establish a temporary space for people across Europe to co-create, exchange ideas, and find a common ground for actions promoting culture, equality and democracy beyond the nation state. The festival tackles topical issues related to Europe from a transnational perspective, by connecting activists, artists and various professionals. It explores the interrelation between artistic imagination and political change and it aims to “regroup, rethink and reclaim the

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 42.

¹²³ Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 8.

European space.”¹²⁴ The festival started in 2007 under the name London Festival of Europe and since then it has spread out all across Europe. Its unique format includes linked practices, events and discourses (such as artistic performances, video screenings, panel discussions and public space activities), thus it produces a shared and collaborative space. It takes place in twelve European countries (both inside and outside of the European Union) not in the shape of twelve different festivals, but as a collective transnational happening. Its network of participating countries includes Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, The Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom. The 2015 edition of the festival, entitled *Beyond Fragments* treated current European issues such as the rise of nationalism and the danger of the unravelling of the EU (Brexit and Grexit), mass unemployment and self-defeating economic policies, the hecatomb in the Mediterranean, human rights and freedom of movement for European citizens and migrants alike.¹²⁵ Thus, this is the very conceptual context within which was released the participatory storytelling project *The Green Screen Diaries*.

The Green Screen Diaries is designed as a two-hour storytelling game for three to six players, which aims to connect people and places across Europe, its past and possible future. The team of players receives a starter kit and step by step instructions, presented in a mysterious box, wrapped in a green cloth. The players follow a journey through public spaces, where team members collaboratively write, perform and record a video diary from the future. The participants use their smartphones to create user-generated content and a green screen in order to record a video, which re-imagines Europe’s future. Through passing on the box among teams, each produced work integrates fragments from other teams’ videos and also serves as a source material for the next group of participants. As the project’s authors claim further “each journey is just one link in an expanding network of European imaginations. Asking the questions: How can we explore Europe from the inner world, from an outside perspective and what will the future look like?”¹²⁶ The project is a clear attempt to invite citizens to participate in the constitution of a European imaginary and cosmopolitan imagination via co-creativity and media use. Similarly, through the notion of *Photoshop for Democracy*, Henry Jenkins has argued that user-generated creativity, which is “playing”

¹²⁴ See also: <https://transeuropafestival.eu/>

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ See also *The Green Screen Diaries* <https://euroalter.com/2015/green-screen-diaries>

with democracy by mixing themes from political discourse with popular culture, has the potential to educate civic participation and practices of deliberation.¹²⁷ Thus, it can be concluded that *The Green Screen Diaries* also opens the possibility for practicing cultural citizenship and user-generated constitution of a potential transcultural European imaginary.



Fig. 5. *The Green Screen Diaries* (2015) <https://euroalter.com/2015/green-screen-diaries>

2.3.4 Sensory affiliation with culture as a constituent element of the transcultural imaginary

A different dimension of the transcultural imaginary could be recognized in destabilizing internal and external differences, resonating with Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis of the mirror stage as a process of alienation between ego/self and imaginary order/reflection. Ellen Berry has related this condition to Julia Kristeva's conceptualization of the cultural role of the foreigner established in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1992). The foreigner, according to Kristeva, reminds us of our own incompleteness or own non-knowledge (in relation to Lacan's reading of alienation). From a historical perspective, the radical difference of the foreigner, Kristeva writes, has been either domesticated (as in the case of assimilation) or exorcised (for instance by ethnic cleansing). No matter the actual effect on the foreigner, in both cases

¹²⁷ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

difference is obliterated. Kristeva's solution then comes in the invitation to accommodate difference by recognizing ourselves as foreigners, as strangers to ourselves. Furthermore, this can be foreseen by putting ourselves in the place of the foreigner, by imagining ourselves as the other. In this sense, Berry claims that "it is through this fundamental act of imagination and psychological displacement that Kristeva envisions and challenges us to construct a cosmopolitanism of a new sort, one that would be founded on a consciousness of its unconscious."¹²⁸

This psychological subtext opens a new direction in the transcultural discourse, one related to embodiment and cultural engagement through sensory involvement and corporeal participation. Therefore, it becomes relevant to address processes of transculturation also as modality of bodily experience.

In this regard, Maya Nadig has suggested that transcultural spaces can be constituted as "emotional and cognitive relation experiences which also occur at non-verbal and corporeal level."¹²⁹ Nadig traces the emergence of this idea to Antony Giddens' proposal of "disembedding" and "reembedding" of social structures as a conceptualization of meaning construction between globalised elements and local dynamics. "Reembedding means the simultaneous new symbolization of multifaceted cultural streams and inclusion of experience, i.e. the body, emotions and culture."¹³⁰ Similarly, Ulf Hannerz has expressed the view that the interrelation between global and local cultural influences entails a sensory experience, since the experiencing with his or her body and senses individual is at one place at any one time. Moreover, Nadig adopts the concept of *intermediate space* to articulate one's capacity for symbolization beyond rational language, meaning and interpretation. This psychoanalytic term was introduced by Wilfred Winnicott to address interpersonal relationships as negotiation between inner subjective reality and outer life. The 'third' sphere between both is a "potential space in which creativity, symbols and difference, i.e. culture and cultural meanings can develop [...] what is special about this locus, at which play and cultural experience occur, is that it *depends existentially on living experience* and not upon hereditary factors."¹³¹ Then, processes of identification can also be components of the intermediate space between internal and external symbolic structures, which suggests continuous

¹²⁸ Ellen E. Berry, "A Transcultural Imaginary" in *Transcultural Experiments*, 174.

¹²⁹ Maya Nadig, "Transculturality in Progress. Theoretical and Methodological Aspects Drawn from Cultural Studies and Psychoanalysis," in *Transculturality – Epistemology, Ethics, and Politics* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 18.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

transformations in one's identity construction. Furthermore, Nadig draws a parallel between *intermediate space* and the *in-between* or *third space* of postcolonial debate, since both mediate between selves and others and between cultural differences.¹³²

More 'tangible' empirical examples of intermediate and embodied identification can be recognized in Winfried Fluck's study on American popular culture and aesthetic experience. In extension of Wolfgang Iser's study of representation as a performative act, Fluck argues that in the act of reception the text (or mediated content) represents two things at once: the world of the text and the imaginary elements added to it by the receiver. This "doubleness" is itself the aesthetic experience that makes us simultaneously articulate imaginary elements and look at them from the outside. Then, aesthetic experience is a state "in-between" that allows us to be "both ourselves and someone else at the same time."¹³³ Drawing upon Richard Shusterman's notion of *somaesthetics*¹³⁴, Fluck also considers that developments in popular media, film and music have created cultural forms of expression that are increasingly effective for the purposes of imaginary self-empowerment and self-extension – "in this process, the individual's engagement with the cultural object gets more and more somatic, so that the gratification derived from popular culture becomes increasingly "embodied."¹³⁵

Imaginary self-empowerment, Fluck remarks, should not be understood as wish fulfilment or self-aggrandizement, but as "an extension of the interiority of the recipient in the act of actualization" that can involve our imagination, feelings and bodily sensations. Fluck's statement can be extended beyond the popular culture framework into a more general scope of reference including other modes of mediation and artistic media that allow for immediate somatic responses. According to Fluck, the individual's search for intensified experience of embodiment (that has been maximized by American popular culture¹³⁶) is what transforms Americanization into self-Americanization. Beyond the Americanization framework, Fluck's thesis can be translated into a theory of self-identification with other culture through somatic involvement. Then, drawing the

¹³² Ibid., 17.

¹³³ Winfried Fluck, "California Blue. Americanization as Self-Americanization," in Alexander Stephan (ed.) *Americanization and Anti-Americanism. The German Encounter with American Culture after 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 228.

¹³⁴ In *Performing Live. Aesthetic Alternatives for the End of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) Richard Shusterman introduces the notion of somaesthetics as the critical study of one's lived experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation and creative self-fashioning.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 230.

¹³⁶ Fluck gives as example techno music and high-speed cutting in Hollywood action movies that have strong sensory effect on the receiver.

assumption that aesthetic embodiment can bring about forms of transculturation, would imply further that a transcultural European imaginary can be constituted through sensory engagement and embodied experiences.

Shipwreck (2014) a compelling short documentary, shot, directed and edited by the Dutch director Morgan Knibbe, which immerses the viewer within the Lampedusa tragedy by employing the sensory potential of sound and camera movement. On 3rd of October 2013 a boat carrying five hundred Eritrean refugees sank off the coast of the Italian island Lampedusa, leading to more than three hundred and sixty lost human lives. The video opens with abstracted colourful close-ups that gradually materialize into multiple crushed boats in a shipwreck graveyard. Among them wanders Abraham, one of the tragedy survivors, who retells the nightmare whispering in Arabic voice-over. This poetic portrayal is juxtaposed with visceral documentary footage from Lampedusa's harbour filled with mourning survivors and coffins, police and local authorities, and flocking around photographers and journalists. The private emotions of victims' immense grief and painful groans are interrupted with the depiction of local media representatives, who passively document the event. Thus, Knibbe questions the ethical dimensions of our media culture, which has trained viewers into immune observers of horrific images and events. Borrowing Susan Sontag's arguments from *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003)¹³⁷, it is relevant to consider that Western mass media has created a secure distance between subject and object, witness and victim, *us* and *others*, resulting in loss of sympathy towards the suffering ones. In contrast, Knibbe's creative approach employs the video medium in an empathic manner in order to restore the emotional distance between spectators and victims by extending imaginatively the former into the latter. With this regard, Maria Pilar Rodriguez and Cristina Ortiz-Cebero have argued that films on immigration are "an example of how cinematographic discourses can serve to offer their audiences an alternative humanistic perspective to interpret new and changing realities, making the value of humanistic thought relevant in approaching social issues."¹³⁸ While *Shipwreck* emphasizes Rodriguez and Ortiz-Cebero's vital standpoint, Knibbe's humanistic perspective is achieved not only via the discursive, but also the sensory and non-verbal dimensions of cinematography. As Thomas Humphrey notes, Knibbe's look at migration is intensely

¹³⁷ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

¹³⁸ Cristina Ortiz-Cebero and Maria Pilar Rodriguez, "European Cinema: Ethical Debates on Immigration Laws" in *The Role of the Humanities in Times of Crisis* (ed. M. P. Rodriguez) (Madrid: DYKINSON, 2016), 73-92, 73.

moving. “The director cuts between scenes of loud, all-consuming, and demonstrative lamentation and the passive, well-meaning sympathy of the Italian authorities. Merged together these two very human reactions create a truly poignant portrait.”¹³⁹ The camera moves between up-ends and swirls:

On the big screen this looks like somebody punch-drunk on emotion spinning a steady cam in an upright position, and the resulting fainting sense of being overwhelmed is genuinely exceptional. This technique is so effective that the impression of movement and being amongst the crowd that it gives become almost unbearable, and it really makes you sympathise with the intensity of grief we see.¹⁴⁰

Thus, the short *Shipwreck* conveys its stark critique towards EU policies on immigration at a somatic level. The documentary’s emotional texture is transmitted through the sensory diapasons of moving-image and sound and it shows that transculturation between European Self and cultural Others, can be achieved as an experiential and *somaesthetic* process.



Fig. 6. Morgan Knibbe, *Shipwreck* (video, 14 min, 2014) trailer:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTV_DqLafu4

2.4 Conclusions: Towards a theory of building cross-cultural understanding in Europe via transcultural aesthetics

The central idea of this chapter was to examine the dimensions of the transcultural paradigm and to map its relevance for comprehending contemporary European cultural processes. The first sub-chapter focused on exploring the various parameters in defining the concept of transculturality. Thus, main connotations and nodes of understanding were pointed out in the intersection between sociology, postcolonial studies and

¹³⁹ Thomas Humphrey. *Morgan Knibbe's Shipwreck: Poignant, Pressing and Perfect*. Nottingham Alternative Film Network online <https://nottinghamalternativefilmnetwork.com/2015/05/06/morgan-knibbes-shipwreck-poignant-pressing-and-perfect/> (accessed 5 July 2016).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

postmodern debates. Parallels between the notions of transculturality, hybridity and in-betweenness were drawn in order to signify that the negotiation of cultural differences is a central modality of the process of transculturation. Then one's capacity for translating difference or extending the self into cultural others was considered as a state of imaginative attachment that can be also perceived as cosmopolitan ethics and transcultural dynamics. Furthermore, it was highlighted that cultural transformation, not simply the coexistence of diverse cultures, is vital for the philosophy of transculturality. It was also suggested that the continuous transformative potential of transculturation becomes mostly obvious in the processes of cultural interaction and creative communication. Thus, the discussion was further supported with examples of artistic and creative expressions, which express engagement with European societies and social realities. The documentary *Our Colonial Hangover* (2014) by Sunny Bergman suggests that the emergence of a transcultural imaginary starts with a process of negotiation of cultural difference between European Self and cultural Others, and via symbolic decolonization of the European imagination from processes of *othering*.

The following sub-chapter positioned the concept of transculturality in the context of cultural studies, so that main theoretical perspectives of the transcultural episteme were presented. First, Mikhail Epstein's understanding of transculturality as a resolution between the postmodern theories of multiculturalism and deconstruction was discussed. Hence, his suggestion of transculturality as a theory of *positive othering* was outlined. According to this approach, one acquires the freedom to shape one's identity as different from others and also from one's own self. Therefore, the essence of transcultural existence can be discovered in a process of constant becoming, where one can participate and engage with different cultures that might be initially excluding each other. Next, the scope of the chapter shifted towards Wolfgang Welsch's transcultural agenda. Welsch's analysis of transculturality emphasizes the transcendence of cultural boundaries. It has emerged in opposition to notions of interculturality and multiculturalism that emphasize differences between homogeneous cultural spheres. Thus, transculturality can be theorized as the production of cross-cultural fusion that happens through networks between cultures, allowing for processes of unification and diversification at the same time. Regarding further this tension between universalization and particularization it was suggested that glocalization can be also understood as a process of transculturation.

The central motive of the next section was to study the constitution of a transcultural imaginary in terms of spatiality. The discussion explored Edward Soja's understanding of the *thirdspace* as a *real-and-imagined* entity and a critical strategy of *thirthing-as-othering* that opens the potential for continuous cultural transformations. This interrelation between reality, (media) representation, imagination and transformative potentiality can be seen as the basis for the emergence of transcultural imaginary. With this regard, Filip Berte's architectural installation *House of Eutopia* (2006-2013), furthermore emphasized that Europe can be understood as a third *real-and-imagined* spatial entity. The various viewpoints and possible routes for traversing European space, which the artwork re-imagines, also correspond to the multiplicity of perspectives, which is intrinsic for the transcultural model.

Next, the constitution of a transcultural imaginary was approached as the dynamics between global cultural flows and reverse flows, studied in Arjun Appadurai's thesis on cultural globalization. Furthermore, processes of glocalization (Robertson), appropriation and recontextualization of cultural repertoires (Kroes) were suggested as modalities of *trans-coding* that allow for processes of transculturation. Furthermore, the definition of transcultural imaginary was related to the continuous potentiality for recombinations of cultural flows. This capacity for constant permutations and realignments was conceptualized through Deleuze and Guattari rhizomatic model of culture that envisages transconnections between cultures in a non-hierarchical system. Furthermore, this theory was extended to the observation that processes of transculturation are intrinsically rhizomatic, since they do not structure cultural influences in a hierarchical order, but functions as a network of multiple cultural impulses. Therefore, the transcultural imaginary does not develop from a single cultural origin, but through multiple interconnected cultural attachments, as the discussion of the graffiti intervention *In Pace with Time* (2011) emphasized.

The following sub-chapter related the concept of transcultural imaginary to the idea of cosmopolitan imagination and its implications in European context. Thus, the discourse was oriented towards studying elements of cultural citizenship and cosmopolitanism from socio-cultural perspective. Drawing upon the positions of Nick Stevenson and Gerard Delanty, Europe was conceptualized as a social space where cosmopolitan imagination can be generated through processes of cultural communication and media participation. In this sense, the transnational transmedia project *The Green Screen Diaries* (2015) emphasized that citizens can participate in the

constitution of a transcultural European imaginary via co-creativity and media use. The participatory dimensions of the project furthermore imply that user-generated content and creative media involvement, can potentially educate practices of deliberation among European citizens.

Another vision on the construction of the imaginary as a mode of transculturation was outlined within the destabilization of internal and external cultural differences. Kristeva's model of the foreigner was used as the conceptual framework for the imaginative process of displacement. Thus, one can accommodate the difference of the foreigner by imagining oneself in the position of the other. Kristeva's perspective was expanded into a basis for proposing the construction of transcultural imaginary through experiential involvement. This suggestion was supported by Nadig's exploration of transculturality as a process of mediation between inner subjective differences and outer world, which happens as a living experience in an *intermediate space* of interaction. Therefore, one's capacity of symbolization is understood in terms of a sensory experience rather than rational language interpretation. Morgan Knibbe's documentary *Shipwreck* (2014) was used as lucid example of imaginative extension of the self into cultural others via somatic perception. The video conveys its message not only by employing the discursive dimensions of moving-image, but also the non-verbal parameters of the medium, such as camera movement and soundscape. Thus, it was concluded that cultural attachment via somatic perception implies that process of transculturation can be also constituted via corporeal experiences.

Overall, the discussed theoretical perspectives and creative examples aimed to suggest that a transcultural European imaginary can be constituted via artistic discourses and creative communication. The final chapter will exemplify this argument further by analysing selected creative projects. Thus, the overall objective of this introductory chapter was to outline the conceptual background for proposing a theory of building cross-cultural understanding in Europe via arts and critical and creative media participation. Moreover, it aimed to establish the conceptual background for the upcoming discussion on the constitution of transcultural aesthetics via creative practices of *trans-coding*, which will be further tackled in the following chapter.

3. Transcultural aesthetics and modalities of cultural and creative trans-coding

The aim of this study is to propose a theory on transcultural aesthetics, which articulates how creative use of artistic media could enhance cross-cultural understanding. This exploration departs from the hypothesis that creative expressions allow for imaginative extension of the self into cultural others, based on theoretical views that treat the constitution of cosmopolitan imagination. As Kwame Anthony Appiah has stated, attachment to foreign cultures begins with “the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from one place other than your own.”¹⁴¹ As the previous chapter suggested, Julia Kristeva has proposed to accommodate cultural difference by imagining ourselves as the other and recognizing ourselves as foreigners, as *strangers to ourselves*. Similarly, Mikhail Epstein conceptualizes transculturality as the difference in identity shaping, which is the state of being different not only from others, but also from one’s own self.

To a certain extent, the transcultural paradigm borrows from Mikhail Bakhtin’s understanding of culture as being fundamentally dialogical – since it can be modified by participants’ interplay and interaction. This connection becomes most obvious in Epstein’s theories on transcultural consciousness, which represent contemporary Russian culturology as an extension of Bakhtin’s work. In reference to Bakhtin and Voloshinov’s theorizations, Stuart Hall has suggested that the dialogical processes of meaning-making relates to the practice of *trans-coding*: “taking and existing meaning and re-appropriating it for new meanings.”¹⁴² While Hall says little on how he assigns the notion of trans-coding to Bakhtin’s work, Bakhtin rather employs the concept of transcendence to describe the process of going beyond oneself or crossing boundaries. Among several of Bakhtin’s texts, the concept of transcendence appears as a central idea – for instance, in “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” (dated around 1920 – 1923) the notion is used to draw a parallel between authorship and God’s creativity.¹⁴³

While Hall relates the notion of *trans-coding* to Bakhtin’s scholarship, the term rather belongs to one of the central representatives of the Moscow-Tartu Semiotic School – Yuri Lotman – and his structuralist semiotics and preoccupation with the topic

¹⁴¹ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 85.

¹⁴² Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications & Open University, 1997), 270.

¹⁴³ Anesa Miller-Pogacar, *Transculture and Culturology: Post-Structuralist Theory in Late and Post-Soviet Russia* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1993), 64.

of human creativity. Lotman makes a distinction between a text with only a communicative function and a creative text – while the first one is composed of one code, the latter should be heterogeneous and heterostructural in terms of coding. Thus, Lotman addresses the problem of creativity as a problem of generating new meanings. Meaning is created “when we have at least two sequence-structures and the ability of transcoding one of these systems into another.”¹⁴⁴ A ‘semiotic situation’ is created when the receiver connects her/his set of codes with the range of codes of the artistic text (visual, aural, cultural). Thus, Lotman claims that:

The text becomes fully a generator of new meanings when the receiver with their own set of codes and with their individual and shared memory connects with its internal polyglottism because ‘the memory of a person coming in contact with a text, can itself be considered a complex text, the contact which leads to creative changes in the information chain.’¹⁴⁵

While studying the creative potencies of cultures, Lotman suggests the sequence of intellectual devices: consciousness – artistic text – culture. “They are all both isostructural and isofunctional in relationship to one another. They exhibit certain fundamental similarities in their structures and relationships between them can be described as dialogical (in Bakhtin’s understanding of the word.)”¹⁴⁶ Moreover, Lotman understands culture in terms of a *semiosphere*, which is “that synchronic semiotic space which fills the borders of culture, without which separate semiotic systems cannot function or come into being.”¹⁴⁷

A resonating relationship between creativity and *transcoding* (as a passage from one milieu to another and constitution of newness) can be followed in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s *geophilosophy* of deterritorialization and conceptualizations of ‘becomings’. Inna Semetsky argues that “*transcoding* is one of the Deleuzian neologisms employed to underline an element of creativity, of invention and of crossing

¹⁴⁴ Yuri Lotman, “О проблеме значений во вторичных моделирующих системах” in *Ученые записки Тартуского государственного университета*, вып. 181(=Труды по знаковым системам, II, 1965), 22–37, 23 quoted in Boguslaw Zylko, “Notes on Yuri Lotman’s structuralism” in *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (London: SAGE, 2015), vol. 18 (I) 27–42, 36 (accessed 17 May 2015).

¹⁴⁵ Yuri Lotman, “Текст и полиглottизм культуры” in Лотман ЮМ, *Избранные статьи в 3-х томах*, (Таллинн: Александра, 1992), 142–147, 146 quoted in Boguslaw Zylko, “Notes on Yuri Lotman’s structuralism” in *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (London: SAGE, 2015), vol. 18 (I) 27–42, 34 (accessed 17 May 2015).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (1990). (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 3.

– traversing – borders between ‘self’ and ‘other.’”¹⁴⁸ Semetsky establishes a connection between educational experiences and *becoming-other* into a mode of ethical responsibility and experiential learning from real events in human culture. “The constructivist process of the production of new concepts, meanings and values embodies *affects* (as a yet *unthought*, non-cognitive dimension of embodies experience) immanent to this very process and (in)forming the flows of thoughts – that is, conceptual understanding.”¹⁴⁹

Following the outlined conceptual background, this chapter will argue that cultural and creative practices of *trans-coding* are intrinsic for the creative process, since inspiration operates by translating codes and fusing impulses beyond cultural and disciplinary boundaries. For instance, the influence of Japanese prints on Van Gogh’s Expressionism or Pablo Picasso’s recontextualization of traditional African art into Cubism, have become the standard for understanding dynamics of intercultural exchange in visual regime. Furthermore, intertextual and intermedial translation across art forms and disciplines (and cultural contexts) could also entail processes of intercultural interaction. A relevant example could be Claude Debussy’s acclaimed composition *La Mer* (completed in 1905), that has been inspired by literary and visual representations of seascapes, among which is one of the symbols of Japanese print art – *The Great Wave* (dated around 1830 – 1833) by Katsushika Hokusai. While the given examples cannot be stripped of certain colonial connotations, the following discussions will engage contemporary artistic expressions in European context, which signify that the potential emergence of a transcultural European imaginary is possible only as a *de-Orientalised* (in Edward Said’s sense) European imaginary, which overcomes discursive and conceptual processes of (Euro-centric) ‘othering’. Moreover, the constitution of a transcultural imaginary as a transcendence of cultural codes should be also understood in terms of a transcultural *semiosphere*, as the shared semantic space for the translation of codes. With this regard, can be questioned humour’s cognitive modalities of reversing the code, and when humour belongs to culture-specific or transcultural aesthetics. As recent controversies around the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and its caricature approach have shown, the mixture of influences and repertoires in intercultural order (such as depiction of religious figures representing

¹⁴⁸ Inna Semetsky, “Becoming-Other: developing the ethics of integration” in *Policy Futures in Education* (London: Sage Publications, 2011), 140 (accessed on 17 May 2015).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

different faiths), does not necessarily evoke creative transculturation; it could also imply processes of ‘othering,’ if codes are not shared among recipients from different cultural backgrounds and contexts, or namely, when a shared *semiosphere* is absent.

Departing from here, one of the central contributions of this study is to reconceptualise transcultural aesthetics as an ongoing praxis of cultural and creative *trans-coding*. Moreover, it will be argued that transcultural aesthetics is defined by several interrelated communication modalities: representation of transcultural identities as a discursive strategy for negotiation of cultural differences; intertextual and intermedial sampling of cultural repertoires as creative praxis provoking transcultural exchange; co-creative cycle of *encoding-decoding-encoding*, which implies active audience participation in processes of critical and creative transculturation; and embodied cultural affiliation, as a transculturalizing strategy at a non-verbal, sensory and corporeal level.

3.1 Representation of transcultural identities

The following section will argue that artistic (re)production of transcultural identities and the creative employment of transcultural repertoires could be rendered as discursive strategies, which trigger negotiation of cultural differences. Moreover, the representation of transcultural identities can be viewed as a central constituent element of transcultural aesthetics and a creative gesture, which *trans-codes* common perceptions of cultural ‘otherness’.

The complexity of defining the concept of identity can be expressed by the fact that it is “drawing meanings from both the discursive and psychoanalytic repertoire, without being limited to either.”¹⁵⁰ Thus, it can be understood as the meeting point between, on the one hand, the discursive practices which frame us as social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, as the processes which construct us as subjects and produce subjectivities.¹⁵¹ Departing from here, the first part of this subchapter will explore Stuart Hall’s theory of representation as a signifying practice, which transmits ‘preferred meanings’ in relation to cultural difference and ‘otherness.’ The second section will focus on creative approaches for subverting and *trans-coding*

¹⁵⁰ Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who needs ‘Identity’?” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 2.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

preferred connotations, a central role within which play the representations of transcultural identities and processes of transculturation.

3.1.1 The politics of representation

Since this study focuses on artistic medium productions, Stuart Hall's work on representation and signifying practices emerges as a relevant theoretical frame of reference. Hall has introduced a dialogical model between representation and cultural identity, which demonstrates their twofold (re)production. Stuart Hall bridges a 'linguistic' *constructionist* approach (using the semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, together with Michel Foucault's discursive perspective towards power/knowledge) with the post-structuralism philosophy of Jacques Derrida (deconstructing the Saussurian model of signification and representation). Hall suggests that representation is a discursive strategy for the construction of significations, meanings and consequently cultural identities. Representation becomes the process or the medium through which these meanings are both created and reified. In this context, according to Hall, identity should be understood "as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation."¹⁵²

Stuart Hall argues that identities are always positioned, emerging 'in context.' Framing his own position and identity as 'diasporic,' he explores two modalities of identity construction – 'being' and 'becoming'. The first one relates to stable frames of reference such as common historical experiences and shared cultural codes that provide 'oneness' and authenticity.¹⁵³ The second order of cultural identity, however, functions not simply through principles of similarity, but also through difference, which defines who we are and what we have become. In the second sense, cultural identity is a matter not only of 'being,' but also of 'becoming.' Therefore, cultural identity should be understood as a flexible construction and a process that undergoes constant transformations – a subject to a "continuous 'play' of history, culture and power."¹⁵⁴ This perspective entails that there is no "fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return." Thus, lucidly opposing essentialism, Hall claims that cultural

¹⁵² Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 223.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 225.

identities are the unstable points of identification or suture, which are dependent on a ‘politics of positioning.’¹⁵⁵ Borrowing Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse as a generator of power/knowledge, Hall adopts a discursive perspective which understands the ‘politics of representation’ as the channel through which the *positioning* and the production of meanings happens. Therefore, Hall suggests that cultural identity is also generated within discursive formations.¹⁵⁶

Furthermore, Hall theorizes the unstable character of cultural identities and meanings by elaborating on the distinction between *difference* and *différance*¹⁵⁷, introduced by Jacques Derrida. While difference is essential for meaning (since without it meaning cannot exist), the concept of *différance* signifies a power relation between the binary oppositions that constitute meaning. Hall is critically engaged in deconstructing binaries and dominant discursive structures, as he categorizes them as reductionist and over-simplified. Drawing upon Derrida’s deconstruction philosophy, Hall emphasizes that the production of meaning in the process of signification can be constantly deferred. Thus, (cultural) differences and meanings are in a continuous process of negotiation: “meaning is never finished or completed, but keeps on moving to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings (...) what is then constituted within representation is always open to being deferred, staggered, serialized.”¹⁵⁸

Therefore, Hall concludes that the ‘cultural play of difference’ within identity cannot be represented (cinematically) as a simple binary opposition – “‘past/present’, ‘them/us.’”¹⁵⁹ This complexity is the beginning of the symbolic, the imaginary, which is “always-already fused,” “always-already creolised” and syncretised with other cultural elements.¹⁶⁰ This view clearly directs back to the conceptualizations of the transcultural imaginary, explored in the previous chapter. Theorising identity as a construction not outside, but within representation implies that cinema is not a “second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists,” but that medium of representation “which is able to

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 226.

¹⁵⁶ Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications & Open University, 1997), 51.

¹⁵⁷ The key concept for Derrida *différance* originates in between the verbs ‘differ’ and ‘defer’. It contradicts Saussure’s claim that meanings are generated through a fixed correspondence between signifier and signified. According to Derrida, meanings are unstable, since they can be negotiated in the process of signification. See also Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 83-87.

¹⁵⁸ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 229.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 228.

¹⁶⁰ Hall’s concrete examples involve linguistic forms of creolization and the hybridization of music and popular culture of the Caribbean diaspora. See also *ibid*, 223.

constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak.”¹⁶¹

Drawing upon Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), also as an extension of Foucault’s power/knowledge argument, Stuart Hall discusses the discursive practice of stereotyping or the *spectacle of the other*. Thus, Hall’s main preoccupation is to contest and subvert dominant regimes of representation, or the ‘politics of representation.’ According to Hall, stereotyping as a representational practice that generates hegemonic meanings through essentializing, reductionism, naturalization and binary oppositions between the self and the other, can be challenged by counter-strategies, which are “*trans-coding* negative images with new meanings.”¹⁶² Hall pays attention to three *trans-coding* strategies: *reversing the stereotype*, using *positive and negative images*, and subverting representation *from within*.¹⁶³ For the sake of the European dimensions of this discussion, the mentioned counter-strategies will be translated into examples of official EU discourses visualizing today’s Europe, which have grasped significant attention. Thus, the ‘politics of representation’ of EU politics could be outlined as a relevant context towards which, or against, artistic discourses contribute for the constitution of a European imaginary.

Reversing the stereotype, or replacing it with a contrasting meaning, does not necessarily guarantee its subversion, as Hall points out, since it could also lead to the generation of a new stereotype.¹⁶⁴ For instance, a similar dynamics can be traced in the highly controversial à la *Kill Bill* (Quentin Tarantino, 2003/4) video *Growing Together* (European Commission, 2012) – initially used by DG Enlargement in attempt to promote EU cooperation and later banned due to allegations of sexism and racism. The European ad depicts a young white woman, dressed like *Kill Bill*’s protagonist – the Bride (performed by Uma Thurman) – who is confronted by several furious opponents: a Chinese Kung Fu master, a traditional Indian warrior with a scimitar and a bare-chested capoeira-style fighter from Brazil. Once surrounded by them, she multiplies into twelve identical selves who encircle her adversaries. Her twelve incarnations stand for EU flag’s twelve stars that symbolize perfection and unity. Conquered by her diplomacy, all characters sit down and meditate in peace. “EU-ma Thurman” represents European foreign policy and EU’s ‘preaching’ and patronizing approach towards

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 236-7.

¹⁶² Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 277.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 270-4.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 270-2.

external political actors and member states, as a recent publication suggests.¹⁶⁵ The attempt for reversing the stereotype of Europe as a white male colonial dominance falls flat, since it is replaced by another stereotype of ‘soft power,’ which still enforces gender and racial discrimination.



Fig. 7. European Commission, *Growing Together* (2012)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKN67ImpO4k>

The next counter-strategy, discussed by Stuart Hall, is the creation of a positive representation of what has been previously abjected, by encoding ‘negative’ imagery with ‘positive’ meaning (such as in the slogan ‘Black is Beautiful’). The problem of the positive/ negative strategy, however, is that adding positive images to a negative dominant regime of representation creates alternative perspectives, but does not “necessarily displace the negative. Since the binaries remain in place, meaning continues to be framed by them.”¹⁶⁶

A similar tension could be recognized in another promotional piece by DG Enlargement – *So similar, so different, so European* (European Commission, 2012). The clip shows enticing landscapes and urban spaces from the countries in Southeast Europe, who have undergone significant political and social transformations after the

¹⁶⁵ See also Caterina Carta “From the ‘Magnificent Castle’ to the Brutish State of Nature: Use of Metaphors and the Analysis of EU’s International Discourse” in (eds. Caterina Carta and Jean-Frederic Morin) *EU Foreign Policy through the Lens of Discourse Analysis: Making Sense of Diversity* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 200.

¹⁶⁶ Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 274.

fall of the Iron Curtain. On their path towards European integration, the potential member states reveal (unexpected) natural beauty and a standard of life which entails European belonging. While the ad has been positively received, it actually implies processes of (cultural) assimilation, rather than respect and acceptance of diversity and cultural difference. The video evokes the well-known Slavoj Žižek's argument that liberal multiculturalism expresses tolerance with the "Other deprived of its Otherness – the decaffeinated Other."¹⁶⁷ The floating captions first question whether each depicted place belongs to a recognized EU member state. Then, fades in the answer, that the corresponding footage had been surprisingly taken in a neighbouring to the EU country. Thus, assimilation to established ideas of Europeanness has been rendered as the 'preferred' criterion for joining 'the club.' In this sense, the binary opposition between 'exemplary' old and 'underdeveloped' new member states still prevails in this *TripAdvisor*-like understanding of EU enlargement and European integration.

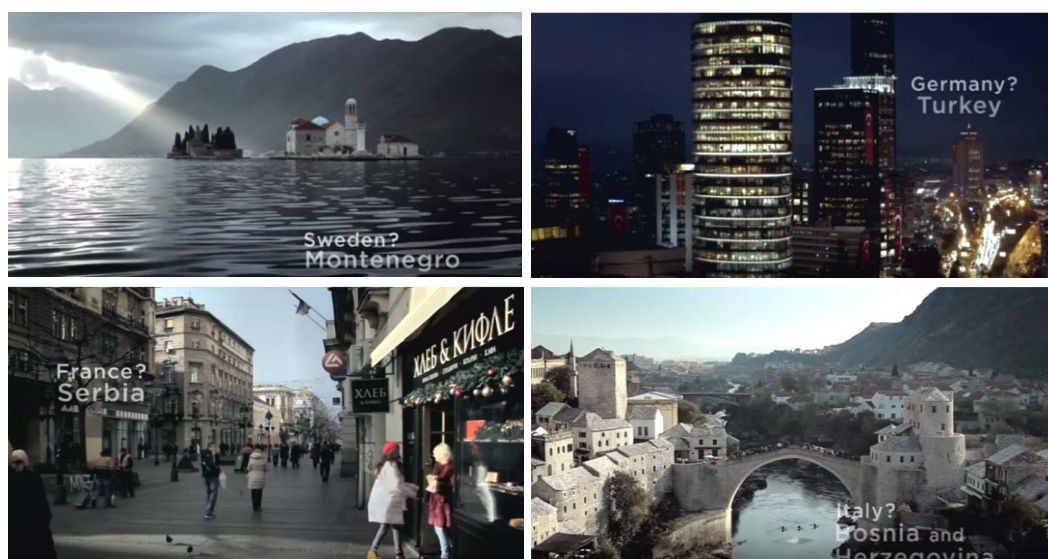


Fig. 8. European Commission, *So similar, so different, so European* (2012)
<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I072401>

¹⁶⁷ Slavoj Žižek "Liberal Multiculturalism masks an old barbarism with a human face." in *The Guardian* (2010) <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/oct/03/immigration-policy-roma-rightwing-europe> (accessed 7 April 2016).

The final *trans-coding* strategy that Stuart Hall takes into consideration is using the complexities, ambivalences and the unstable character of meanings (which are constantly in negotiation and cannot be finally fixed). Instead of avoiding certain categories (such as race, gender, sexuality), this strategy involves *working on* them, so that signifying practices could be contested *through the eye of representation* or *from within*. Furthermore, Hall suggests (in relation to stereotypical representations of black bodies and black sexuality) that the *from within* strategy attempts to de-familiarize, make strange or explicit what is often hidden. Thus, it could play with erotic dimensions and deploy humour.¹⁶⁸

A relevant example in this direction is an earlier EU effort for launching ‘sexy’ communication campaigns – the most watched on EUTube,¹⁶⁹ with over one million hits, EU video clip – *Let’s Come Together* (European Commission, 2007). Posted under the banner *Film lovers will love this!*, the clip promotes the former MEDIA programme and the audiovisual sector in Europe. The video assembles a daring compilation of cinematic orgasms from internationally screened movies, supported by the MEDIA funding scheme. Its untraditional for the EU humorous language has stirred a vibrant public discussion, including opinions from conservative European politicians, who have proclaimed the video as a “waste of tax-payers money” and “soft porn.”¹⁷⁰

The strategy of *trans-coding from within* counts on double encoding of the idiom ‘to come together.’ The clip evokes indirect associations with Beatles’ song *Come Together*, written by John Lennon in 1969 for a political rally. The democratic potencies of the expression (suggesting support, mass gathering, collective action, or probably even integration) are released through the sexual connotation of the verb ‘come’ and the visual representation of sexual climaxes. Similarly, the expression ‘cinema lovers’ can be read both as cinephilia and love-making. In this sense, the video employs the largely used advertising mechanism of *bending* the meaning. For instance, Rob Kroes has written on the unstable semantic construction of American advertisements, where bending the message implies that the commercial slogan “Freedom of Choice” can be also read in reverse with a political connotation as the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ European Union’s YouTube channel

¹⁷⁰ Referencing respectively, the Polish ultra-conservative politician Roam Giertych and the British conservative MEP Chris Heaton-Harris, see also Aneta Podkalicka and Chris Shore “Communicating Europe? Communication Policy and Cultural Politics” in (eds. Chiara Valentini and Giorgia Nesti) *Public Communication in the European Union: History, Perspectives and Challenges*. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 102-3.

“Choice of Freedom.”¹⁷¹ Thus, the ambiguity of possible meanings, as Hall explains, can function as a *trans-coding* mechanism. Therefore, *Let's Come Together* clip could be read at several levels – supporting filmmaking in Europe; watching films together; belonging to Europe – all of which are elevated into ecstatic experiences. According to YouTube regulation and restriction policies, the video is accessible only by users above eighteen years of age.

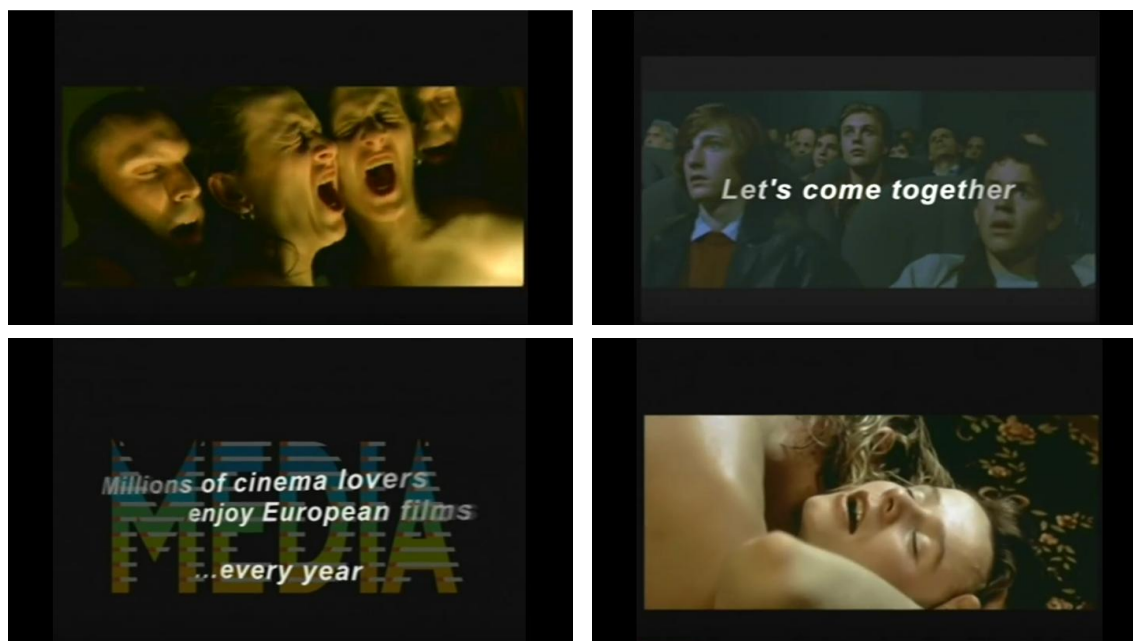


Fig. 9. European Commission, *Let's Come Together* (2007)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koRlFnBIDH0>

After this introduction on Stuart Hall's counter-strategies for reversing 'preferred meanings,' the next subsection will explore the *trans-coding* role played by the representations of transcultural identities and processes of transculturation in artistic expressions devoted to today's Europe. Thus, the potential emergence of a transcultural European imaginary will be studied as a creatively reified construction.

¹⁷¹ Rob Kroes, "American Empire and Cultural Imperialism: A View from the Receiving End," in Thomas Bender (ed.) *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 306.

3.1.2. Trans-coding identity

The interconnection between identity and processes of transculturation has become a central motif and creative concern among European artists and filmmakers who come from diaspora and immigrant communities, or have the nomadic experience of shifting cultural contexts. Thus, their often auto-ethnographic work has been marked by the cultural sensitivity of in-betweenness and the construction of identity in the interstice between cultures, roots, spatial distances, real and symbolic spaces.

With this regard, the films *Bend It Like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha, 2002), *The Edge of Heaven* (Fatih Akin, 2007), *Le Harve* (Aki Kaurismäki, 2011) have become emblematic for studying cinematic representations of transculturality in Europe. This tendency can be traced, for instance, in the recent books *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (2015) by Isolina Ballesteros¹⁷² and *The Other in Contemporary Migrant Cinema: Imagining a New Europe?* (2016) by Guido Rings,¹⁷³ who (among other authors) treat the mentioned films as ‘popular’ examples of transcultural cinema.

The following discussion will focus on Fatih Akin’s *The Edge of Heaven*¹⁷⁴ and its creative approach of *trans-coding* cultural ‘otherness’ and using the representation of transcultural dynamics as a discursive strategy for the negotiation of cultural differences. The film tells the cross-stories of two mothers, two daughters, a father and a son, structured in three novels. The main character Nejat represents transculturality, since he is a second generation immigrant with Turkish heritage, who paradoxically works as a university professor in German Studies and Literature at Hamburg University. In search of the deported asylum seeker Ayten, he encounters the owner of a German bookshop in Istanbul, who feels homesick, wants to sell his business and return to his native Germany. Nejat replaces him as an owner of the German bookstore, thus in “return” to his *imaginary homeland*¹⁷⁵ (Turkey) his identity inverts. Transforming from a representative of his native (Turkish) culture within the other culture (in Hamburg), in

¹⁷² Isolina Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (Bristol: Intellect, 2015).

¹⁷³ Guido Rings, *The Other in Contemporary Migrant Cinema: Imagining a New Europe?* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁷⁴ *The Edge of Heaven* is the winner of the *Best screenplay* award at the Cannes Film Festival 2007, the Best film EU Parliament LUX award 2007 and was selected for Germany’s entry to contest at the Oscars in 2007.

¹⁷⁵ Referring to Salman Rushdie’s concept that reflects the need of writers in exile, immigrants and expatriates to restore and reclaim the land of origin from which they have been displaced. Thus, they construct an imaginary and fictional version (among many other possible versions) of one’s homeland based of fragments of distorted memories. See also *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 10.

Istanbul Nejat exploits the freedom to perform the other (German) culture within his native one – a plot line corresponding to Mikhail Epstein's formulation of transculturality. Questioning the traditional notions of European cinema, the editors of *Shifting Landscapes: Film and Media in European Context* (2008) recognize that "film directors such as Akin subvert traditional binaries such as European vs. non-European in a multitude of ways. As 'others within,' these directors present their audiences (both in Europe and elsewhere) with an experience of inversion in identificatory processes."¹⁷⁶ Exactly this inversion (the condition of being different from others, as well as from one's own self, if following Epstein) is projected in Nejat's transcultural character, which portrays a number of cultural identifications that could be performed.

Furthermore, it can be suggested that Nejat acts as Fatih Akin's alter ego and gives expression to the director's own transcultural identity. The paradox that Nejat embodies – a scholar of Turkish ethnic origin teaching Goethe and German culture – can be directly projected onto reality regarding Akin himself. As one of the new faces of German cinema, he has been often questioned on his German belonging.¹⁷⁷ As a son of Turkish immigrants (raised and educated in Germany), Akin perceives himself as a German filmmaker, although his artistic expression has been marked by the recurring themes of the return to the homeland, the search for identity, the dynamics between European and non-European sentiments. Similarly to other filmmakers emerging from immigrant or diaspora communities and bearing the label of "hyphenated identities,"¹⁷⁸ Akin displays a complex sense of "Europeanness" on the shifting boundaries between languages, cultures and perceptions of belonging. Akin's complex identity, reflected in Nejat's character and his 'travel to the self' (symbolised by the narrative shifts between Hamburg and Istanbul) illustrates a model of transculturality going beyond the binary opposition of "native" and "other" culture (still tangible in Mikhail Epstein's understanding). Akin rather articulates an auto-ethnographic identity, which refers to Homi Bhabha's conceptualization of negotiated difference – "where difference is

¹⁷⁶ Miyase Christensen and Nezih Erdoğan, "The Many Faces of Film and Media in Europe," in *Shifting Landscapes: Film and Media in European Context*, ed. Miyase Christensen and Nezih Erdoğan (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 3.

¹⁷⁷ When Akin received the Golden Bear for Best Picture with *Head On* (2004), it was notable that the first in decades German-produced film winning at the Berlinale, was created by a second generation immigrant.

¹⁷⁸ See also Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001). Naficy researches the filmmaking of postcolonial, Third World, and other displaced individuals living in the West and how their personal experiences of exile or diaspora translate into cinema.

neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*¹⁷⁹ – a new entity, which is constantly shaping in between cultural contexts. By developing Nejat's character, Akin manages to deconstruct dominant mass media discourses that depict German and Turkish identities as binary oppositions. His artistic discourse constructs novel meanings by deferring cultural differences and constitutes a 'third space' from where his new position on understanding Europe emerges. Akin creates a new model of a cultural identity that can be understood as transcultural, since it is constantly in a process of 'becoming,' referring to Hall. It shapes via participation in several cultures, which allows for the manifestation of difference within the same personality, as being simultaneously different from others and also from the self (regarding Mikhail Epstein and Julia Kristeva's theories). In this sense, *The Edge of Heaven* trans-codes identity into a processual construction, which transcends cultural differences into a new, 'third' and transcultural entity.



Fig. 10. Fatih Akin, *The Edge of Heaven* (Germany, 2007) <http://www.imdb.com>

On a different layer, the plot of *The Edge of Heaven* tells another transculturally encoded story – the one of the German university student Lotte and the Turkish asylum seeker Ayten. To a certain degree both characters represent the dichotomy between the metaphors of the *tourist* (Lotte) and the *vagabond* (Ayten/Gul) with which Zygmunt Bauman conceptualizes freedom of choice and movement in the postmodern condition. If the former illustrates the world of the globally mobile, the latter represents the world

¹⁷⁹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 219.

of the one who is locally tied.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, these conceptualizations correspond to Bauman's own reading of glocalization as "globalization for some and localization for others."¹⁸¹

This narrative line also evokes Turkey's accession to the EU and, in a Foucauldian manner, it displays the biopolitical order which frames Lotte's and Ayten's experiences of police control, imprisonment and discipline. Before being departed and jailed in Turkey, Ayten (who is a radical Kurdish activist) is denied political asylum in Germany, on the paradoxical grounds that since Turkey is a country at the 'edge' of the EU, it cannot endanger the girl's safety. Thus, it has been suggested that the title *The Edge of Heaven* itself should be interpreted as an ironic reference to Turkey's entry in the new Europe.¹⁸²

The complex socio-political climate that Akin grasps, however, emerges as the counterpoint of a potential transcendence of borders between the EU and Turkey, which proves possible through interpersonal interaction, friendship and love. The gradual falling in love of Lotte and Ayten (that they express in English) renders the emotional texture of a relationship, which crosses nation-state borders, physical distances, cultural and gender categorizations. Akin uses the trope of *gender trouble*, which portrays identity as un-fixed, performative and free-floating (unrelated to essence) social construction, as Judith Butler has defined it in her theorizations of sex, gender and *critically queer* performativity.¹⁸³ Moreover, the representation of Lotte and Ayten's relationship and the theme of 'queering' function as a symbolic crossing of boundaries, which Akin employs creatively in order to subvert and *trans-code* any form of essentialism. Thus, it can be concluded that Akin's cinematic representation of transcultural identities and processes of transculturation operates as a critical discursive strategy, which challenges cultural 'othering' and, instead, (re)produces transcultural consciousness.

With regards to critical and creative *trans-coding*, the next section will engage more examples from Fatih Akin's cinematic expression. The final chapter will explore

¹⁸⁰ See also Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

¹⁸¹ Zygmunt Bauman, "On Glocalization: Or Globalization for Some, Localization for Some Others," in *Thesis Eleven*, Vol.54, No. 1 (Blackwell, August, 1998), 37-49.

¹⁸² Philip French, "The Edge of Heaven," *The Guardian*, 24 February 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2008/feb/24/drama.worldcinema> (accessed 15 January 2015).

¹⁸³ See also Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1990.)

further the discursive strategy of representing transcultural identities by analysing as a case study the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe* (2011-2013).

3.2 Sampling of cultural repertoires

This subchapter aims to suggest that transcultural aesthetics could be also understood as a creative praxis composed of *trans-coding* functions, such as intertextual and intermedial remixing and recontextualization of repertoires across cultural borders. Initially, the text will sketch out certain theoretical perspectives on the postmodern gesture of sampling signs, which art and media historians have defined with the often interchangeable notions of collage, pastiche, appropriation, remix, recycling. From this stand point, the subchapter will argue further that the creative process of remixing repertoires in a cross-cultural order could be artistically employed as a form of critical and creative *trans-coding* that can trigger processes of transculturation.

With this regard, the subversive and transculturalizing character of the so-called Turkish-German cinema has marked the emergence of a transcultural European imaginary. For instance, Fatih Akin's filmmaking (which operates beyond the hyphen) creatively constitutes a *third space* (in reference to Bhabha and Soja's conceptions), which emanates a transformative and transcultural potential. Akin's *stereoscopic*¹⁸⁴ perspective towards cultures does not only define the identity inversions of his characters, but also maps conceptually his overall work. His aesthetic approach of generating a cross-cultural *third space* involves the postmodern creative gestures of appropriation, quotation and recycling of cultural repertoires. As Akin has put it himself in relation to his film *The Edge of Heaven* (2007):

I am a cinema DJ. I can mix Fassbinder with Fellini. Cinema reminds of sampling. Costa-Gavras' movie *Missing* influenced me. I tried to shoot the runaway scene like Polanski would do it. I try to watch a movie a day. I watched a lot of silent movies before this. I really tried to tell the story in the form of a silent movie, without language. This is DJing.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Referring to Salman Rushdie who has written on the bicultural world of the colonised subjects and their double perspective, or as he puts it, their 'stereoscopic vision' to the world. See also *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981- 1991* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 19.

¹⁸⁵ Interview discussing the making of *The Edge of Heaven* by Karin Luisa Badt, "Fatih Akin 'The Other Side of Heaven,'" *Paris Voice*, 2010, <http://www.parisvoice.com/movies/427-fatih-akin-qthe-other-side-of-heavenq> (accessed 1 March 2015).

To a certain extent, Akin's quote 'migrates' into cinematic language the canonical for postmodernism Roland Barthes' discourse on the end of (literary) authorship. In "The Death of the Author" (1968) Barthes states:

(...) the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. Did he wish to *express himself*, he ought at least to know that the inner 'thing' he thinks to 'translate' is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely; (...) life never does more than imitate the book, and the book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred.¹⁸⁶

In this direction, an example from Akin's *The Edge of Heaven* could be the role Susanne (Lotte's mother) – performed by Hanna Schygulla – one of the stars of New German Cinema and a long-term inspiration for Rainer Werner Fassbinder, whose work as Fatih Akin describes, has influenced his creative expression. Thus, in her role Schygulla emerges already as a *myth*¹⁸⁷ (Barthes), which Akin has employed conceptually into the plot of his film. *The Edge of Heaven* itself recycles the typical for Fassbinder repertoires of subverting common perceptions of immigrants as cultural others. The following subsections will employ further examples from Akin's aesthetics of 'cinema DJing'.



Fig. 11. Fatih Akin, *The Edge of Heaven* (2007, Germany), <http://www.imdb.com>

¹⁸⁶ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in *Image-Music-Text* (tr. Stephen Heath) (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 146-7.

¹⁸⁷ According to Barthes *myth* is a *third order of signification* composed of a denotative and connotative level. Translated into the actual example, this would mean that on the level of denotation Hanna Schygulla is a German actress; on the level of connotation, Schygulla symbolizes the ethos of New German Cinema and Fassbinder's filmmaking. See also Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (1990 ed. London: Vintage, 1957), 142-143.

3.2.1 Culture of sampling

David J. Gunkel's recent book *Of Remixogy: Ethics and Aesthetics after Remix* (2015) discusses 'remix' as a common practice of combing pre-existing media content across music, literature, visual arts and digital media. Gunkel explores the 'terminological mix-up', as he puts it, between notions of collage, mashup, bootleg, versioning, sampling, pastiche, cut-and-paste and so on. According to him, these methods of remixing content date back to 'collage' in visual regime (which earliest examples include works by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque and Juan Gris), William Burroughs' literary 'cut-ups' of cutting and rearranging textual fragments from newspapers and magazines, as well as the electro-acoustic sound compositions and sonic experiments of *music concrète*.¹⁸⁸ Gunkel's broader reflections on Roland Barthes, contemporary authorship and remix is that "we can say that the DJ is just the most recent manifestation of the way authorship has always been situated, instituted, and constructed,"¹⁸⁹ as he writes elsewhere.

Since the modality of sampling repertoires is not only intrinsic for the culture of making art, but also for the culture of making social sciences, Barthes' conception of 'the death of the author' has been reshuffled in multiple versions. With this regard, Homi Bhabha, insists that cultural translation should be understood both as representation and as reproduction:

(...) translation is also a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense – imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it *can* be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on: the 'original' is never finished or complete in itself.¹⁹⁰

Furthermore, Julia Kristeva explains the translation of cultural content through her coinage of intertextuality – the formation of a text through the borrowing, transformation and cultural recycling of other pre-existing texts – which she introduces as a reflection on Bakhtin's dialogism.¹⁹¹ Zygmunt Bauman, correspondingly, recognizes that culture as praxis is a matter not only of creation, but also of repetition and reproduction. Specifically, in the context of global cultural flows as Bauman claims,

¹⁸⁸ David J. Gunkel, *Of Remixogy: Ethics and Aesthetics after Remix* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015)

¹⁸⁹ David J. Gunkel, "What Does it Matter Who is Speaking? Authorship, Authority, and the Mashup" in *Popular Music and Society* (Vol. 35, No. 1, February 2012), 78. (Accessed 30 March 2016)

¹⁹⁰ Bhabha, "The Third Space," 210.

¹⁹¹ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

if “(...) the catchword of modernity was creation; the catchword of postmodernity is recycling.”¹⁹²

Moreover, by sharing Jean Baudrillard’s media pessimism and concept of *simulacrum*, Fredric Jameson analyses the postmodern condition as loss of historicity and the schizophrenic production of emptied-out stylizations, which are commodified and consumed.¹⁹³ Jameson’s renowned debate announces *pastiche* as one of postmodernism’s most significant features. For Jameson, pastiche’s constant reuse and reformulations of symbolic meanings and signs weaken the associations with the original referent – a connection, which according to him, is better graspable in other less dominant postmodern forms of reuse, such as parody and kitsch:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody’s ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse (...) Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor.¹⁹⁴

Thus, according to Jameson, postmodern or contemporary art as a form of pastiche is “going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; (...) one of its essential messages will involve the necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past.”¹⁹⁵ Jameson’s statement can be understood better in light of his broader criticism on capitalist logic, commodity society and the “depthlessness” and the “waning of affect” in postmodern culture.¹⁹⁶

3.2.2 Sampling of signs as a symbolic resistance

Linda Hutcheon offers a different than Jameson’s stance on postmodern aesthetics, which favours the self-reflexive, “self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining”¹⁹⁷ character of postmodern culture. Contrarily to Jameson’s perspective

¹⁹² Zygmunt Bauman, “From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity,” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 18.

¹⁹³ See also Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press 1991).

¹⁹⁴ Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” in *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture* (ed. Hal Foster). (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983), 114.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115 -116.

¹⁹⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press 1991).

¹⁹⁷ Linda Hutcheon. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. (New York: Routledge, 1989),1.

that postmodern reuse is “a value-free, decorative, de-historicized”¹⁹⁸ quote of the past, Hutcheon argues that parody, by an ironic play with society’s contradictions, *politicizes* representation and resists the ideology of interpretation:

(...) through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference (...) parody is doubly coded in political terms: it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies.¹⁹⁹

On a similar note, this dissertation recognizes the role of parody and its transformative potential in socially engaged artistic expressions and user-generated content (as a topic of the next subchapter). Recycling and remixing of cultural signs, then, can operate as modalities of critical and creative *trans-coding*. In this sense, the sampling of cultural repertoires as an artistic practice of “cut’n’mix” (to re-use Dick Hebdige’s rhetoric) can bring about an expression of resistance. Hebdige’s own treatment on signifying practices, (cultural) identity and the art of ‘versioning’ as symbolic forms of resistance, plays out in his writings on subcultures, style and the fusion of cultural influences within Afro-Caribbean music.²⁰⁰ In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) he compares the subversive energy and eclectic philosophy of punk (and the way all subcultural styles are constructed) with ‘bricolage’ – the quintessential creative practice of the avant-garde Dada movement. Drawing upon Andre Breton’s theorizations of Dadaism, Hebdige recognizes that the radical for Dada and Surrealism aesthetic practices of collage, use of ready-mades, dreams based work, which provoke juxtaposition of different realities and generate a subversion of common sense, are relevant for the styles of revolt.²⁰¹ Certainly, the same social tension and potential for symbolic resistance has marked “the wild style graffiti,”²⁰² as Hebdige defines it. Since the 1970s graffiti and street art has turned into a transnational movement, which by re-appropriating (urban) spaces aims to transgress social boundaries. Within this chapter’s conceptual framework, particular consideration should be given to graffiti’s creative device of re-mixing signs and thus *trans-coding* meanings in critical and creative order.

In the context of mapping today’s art expressions, which aim to raise our European consciousness (as objective of this dissertation), must be mentioned Banksy’s

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 94.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 93-101.

²⁰⁰ See also Dick Hebdige, *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style*, (London: Routledge, 1979).

²⁰¹ Ibid., 105.

²⁰² Dick Hebdige, *Cut’n’mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), 130.

satirical street art. Several of his recent works strike a severe critique on Europe's ineffectiveness in dealing with the ongoing refugee crisis. For instance, in January 2016, an artwork representing Cosette from Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* (1862) has appeared on the French embassy's facade in London. The tears in the girls' eyes, just like the CS gas can bellow her, comment on the use of tear gas by French authorities in the refugee camp in Calais, France. The interactive and transmedial element of the work – the stencilled QR code – links to an online YouTube video that shows the police violations on the camp. Banksy builds his criticism by recontextualizing the popular image of Cosette, based on a drawing by the French illustrator Émile Bayard, created for the first edition of the book. Afterwards, the sketch has been transformed into an etching by Gustave Brion, and later has been largely used promotionally in contemporary interpretations (films, musicals and interactive games) of Hugo's novel. In this sense, Banksy's creatively reified criticism involves encoding of an emblematic for French culture repertoire with a new meaning.

Similarly, an earlier artwork of his represents the late Steve Jobs (the founder of Apple) as an immigrant carrying an early computer model and a bag of belongings over shoulder. The work had been sprayed on the walls of the refugee camp in Calais in December 2015. It plays with Steve Jobs' personal background as a son of a Syrian immigrant to the US and tries to subvert common perceptions on immigration as necessarily downgrading for the host country's economy. Thus, the visual generation of new connotations, which Banksy has mastered eloquently, can be also understood in terms of critical and creative *trans-coding*.



Fig. 12. Banksy, *Les Misérables* (2016) <http://banksy.co.uk/out.asp> (left, centre)

Fig. 13. Émile Bayard – *Young Cosette sweeping* (drawing, 1862) <https://commons.wikimedia.org> (right)



Fig. 14. Banksy, *The Son of a Migrant from Syria* (2015) <http://banksy.co.uk/out.asp>

3.2.3 Sampling of cultural codes as a transculturalizing strategy

This subsection aims to suggest that the creative methods of sampling, reusing and remixing cultural codes can trigger creatively reified processes of transculturation. Therefore, the sampling of cultural repertoires can also operate as a *transculturalizing* strategy, which artists and filmmakers make use of in constructing third spaces beyond cultural boundaries.

Ellen Berry and Mikhail Epstein propose that multiplicity of viewpoints in the creative act allows for transcendence of cultural contexts and can serve as a *transculturalizing* strategy. With this regard, Epstein identifies the essay as the quintessential transcultural genre, since it is a hybrid form into which all other genres,

or what has been excluded from them, can assemble together. The highest manifestation of such creative transculturation, Epstein discovers in hyperauthorship that can guarantee a multiplicity of perspectives into one symbiotic genre. *Transculturalizing* strategies deliberately “encourage us to unite ideas that seem most disparate, thereby compelling connections across multiple differences.”²⁰³ In this sense, the sampling of cultural repertoires, as a fusion of diverse perspectives, can also perform as a transculturalizing strategy that generates novel perceptions. Sampling can function as a critical strategy of *thirthing-as-othering* that allows for a critical “other-than” choice, which speaks through its otherness, as Edward Soja has put it. Thus, the creative construction of a ‘third space’ between cultural influences, that sampling allows for, has become a constituent element of transcultural aesthetics. Furthermore, the sampling of repertoires could function as a discursive strategy, which conceptually provokes transculturation.

A distinctive repertoire, which has traversed most cross-cultural creative expressions, is the trope of the journey, which is archetypal in our collective imagination, also as a metaphor for living and identity construction. As Vladimir Propp’s extensively applied structural analysis of Russian folk tales already suggests, the hero – the protagonist – can prove as such between the functions of *departure* and *return*²⁰⁴. Rendering the countless cross-cultural translations of the recurring theme of the journey, in intertextual and intermedial order, seems slightly possible. In literature, the origins of the journey as a theme can be searched back in mythological narratives, as Mircea Eliade (among others authors) has suggested in his book *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History* (1971).²⁰⁵ In film culture, the emergence of the ‘road movie’ as a genre can be dated back to the earliest cinematic references (Lumiere brothers’ *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, 1895 and Georges Méliès’ *A Trip to the Moon*, 1902) as the editors of *Crossing New Europe: Postmodern Travel and the European Road Movie* (2006) have mentioned in reference to Bertnam M. Gordon’s thesis.²⁰⁶ Thus, the trope of travel has emerged as a cross-cultural leitmotif – a subject of constant recontextualizations between cultures and creative expressions. The road can be also

²⁰³ Ellen Berry, “The Lawlessness of Genres,” in *Transcultural Experiments*, 180-3.

²⁰⁴ Propp defines 31 narrative functions in the *Morphology of the Folktale* (2nd ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968) among which leaving home is central for the progression of the plot.

²⁰⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

²⁰⁶ Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli, *Crossing New Europe: Postmodern Travel and the European Road Movie* (London: Wallflower, 2006), 4.

read as an archetypal model of transculturation, since it symbolizes the *third space* of cultural encounters, interactions and potential cultural transformations, where identities are negotiated and performed.

In this direction, the creation a cross-cultural *third space* can be mapped throughout the oeuvre of Fatih Akin, and specifically in his documentary *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005). The film investigates the fusion of Eastern and Western music influences in music scene of Istanbul, which being at the interstice between Europe and the Orient, emerges as a real and a virtual centre on the map of transculturality. Furthermore, *Crossing the Bridge* with its transcendence of cultural boundaries and literal crossing of geopolitical borders, constructs a space of transcultural coexistence between East and West. Then, the city's music scene serves as the *third space* where differences and identities are negotiated. It functions as a synecdochic version of a transcultural Europe and evokes the constitution of a creatively reified “another Europe” (in reference to Salman Rushdie and Chris Rojek’s conception of ‘another’ culture, discussed in the previous chapter.)



Fig. 15. Fatih Akin, *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005, Germany) <http://www.imdb.com>

The Edge of Heaven (2007) similarly entails the fusion between West and East and between Christendom and Islam through employing the interreligious narrative of Abraham’s sacrifice of his son. The final scene in the film takes place in Turkey during Kurban Bayram, which celebrates Abraham’s devotion to God. A conversation about the holiday between the main characters highlights that both Christians and Muslims share the same religious plot. This moment becomes subversive for the son-father

relationship, as one of the film's storylines. Thus, within Akin's intertextual work the story of Abraham is stylized into a transcultural repertoire and a symbol of the parent-child relationship, which the whole movie recounts.

Furthermore, Akin's intertextual references expand beyond the film medium and sample literary codes in intermedial order. For instance, the false name Gul Korkmaz – used by one of the female protagonists in the film – Ayten, is borrowed from Selim Ozdogan's book *The Daughter of the Blacksmith* (2005)²⁰⁷ that tells the story of the young Turkish woman Gul who migrates to Germany in the 1970s. The book itself appears in the film (with a fictional Turkish translation of the title) as a present that Nejat gives to his father Ali. This intermedial reference to Ozdogan's novel functions as a framed narrative which resonates with Ayten's story. Then, Akin's artistic act of cultural translation of aesthetic codes between artistic media can be conceptualized as a process of creative transculturation.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that within artistic intertextual variations (exemplified by Akin's work for instance), transculturality can be also understood as the dynamic cross-cultural exchange of signs into a simulacral relationship, whose reference point has been lost in translation. Moreover, the *trans-coding* of cultural repertoires can be employed as a 'strategic' creative practice, which aims to (re)produce processes of transculturation. With this regard, the following chapter will explore as a case study *Remapping Europe, a Remix Project* (2013), organized by the DocNext Network and the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), which contests dominant media representations of migration in European societies by re-mixing media and film archives.

²⁰⁷ Selim Ozdogan is Turkish-German writer from Akin's generation (and a close friend of his). His novel *The Daughter of the Blacksmith* was originally published in German in 2005, and translated into Turkish in 2007. The copy of the book shown in the film is a 'fictional' one, not the actual publication in Turkish. The latter was still in process while the shooting of *The Edge of Heaven* took place.

3.3 Encoding-decoding-encoding cycle of critical media participation

While “the death of the author” transpired as a central topic of the previous subchapter, this section will focus on “the birth of the reader,” as Roland Barthes has positioned the active role of the audience.²⁰⁸ It will be argued that the participatory aspects of our *convergence culture* (Jenkins, 2006) and the active role of both artists and audiences in encoding/decoding (Hall 1973/1980) and potentially *trans-coding* meanings should be taken into consideration while studying processes of transculturation. It will be also suggested that Hall’s communication model could be re-thought into a loop system of *encoding-decoding-encoding*, involving the generation of new meanings at the receiving end.

In European context, can be mapped the emergence of transmedial art projects, which re-imagine Europe across media platforms and modalities of participation. For instance, *Farewell, Comrades!* (2011-13) is a coproduction between *Gebrueder beetz filmproduktion*, Artline Films, ARTE France, ARTE G.E.I.E. and ZDF Germany, which has a transmedial character and involves elements of participatory video. *Farewell Comrades!* includes six documentary TV series (broadcast across a number of European countries), interactive web component, exhibitions and live events, with accompanying books and DVDs. The aim of *Farewell Comrades!* is to offer an interactive and immersive online documentary format built upon personal narratives by citizens from the former Eastern Bloc. The emotional texture of the documentaries counts on personal insights and reflections on everyday’s life behind the Iron Curtain. Through re-mediating real life stories represented by the postcards, the project gives a voice to European citizens, who encode new meanings and construct alternative discourses on the collapse of communism. The collection of postcards is structured chronologically, geographically or thematically (e.g. under the topics: industrial production, love, escape, freedom of expression, media, religion, secret service, utopia and others).

²⁰⁸ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” in *Image-Music-Text* (tr. Stephen Heath) (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 148.



Fig. 16. *Farewell, Comrades!* (2013) <http://www.farewellcomrades.com/en/flash/#/home/>

3.3.1. Active audience reception and dimensions of media participation

By applying a semiotic approach (in reference to Roland Barthes' concepts of *myth*²⁰⁹ and the polysemic sign), Stuart Hall develops a communication model of encoding on behalf of the producer, and decoding on the side of the receiver. Hall assumes that events, objects and people do not possess stable meanings, but rather that the meanings are produced by the participants in a culture, who have the power to make things mean or signify something. The encoding/decoding model was developed in relation to television in the 1980's and aims at exposing that representational regimes predispose audiences to perceive 'preferred meanings.' As Hall puts it, "(...) there is no one true meaning. Meaning 'floats.' It cannot be finally fixed. However, attempting to 'fix' it is the work of a representational practice, which intervenes in the many potential meanings of an image in an attempt to privilege one."²¹⁰

According to Hall there are four stages in the (televised) circuit of meaning: production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction, which are 'relatively autonomous.' Each one of these moments is characterized by embedding of meanings. However, the reception of meanings (decoding) at each level might differ

²⁰⁹ Analyzing the cognitive dimensions of representation, Barthes discusses the levels of denotation – as a *naturalizing* mechanism, and connotation, where *codes* can be recognized. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (1990 ed. London: Vintage, 1957), 142-143.

²¹⁰ Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications & Open University, 1997), 228.

from the intended encoding, since television messages are constructed as polysemic sign systems that can be interpreted in different ways. The denotative level of the television sign is fixed by certain codes. The connotative level, however, is “more open, subject to active transformations, which exploit its polysemic value.”²¹¹ Thus, multiple connotative configurations can exist. Still, not any interpretation is possible, but only the one which is ‘imprinted’ in certain limits. In this sense, Hall indicates a clear distinction between polysemy and pluralism. For instance, power-relations embedded in the stage of production can influence the point of reception. Therefore, the communication circuit also functions as a circuit reproducing a pattern of domination. The messages can be structured in a dominant hegemonic encoding/decoding, which directs towards ‘preferred meanings’ if producers and receivers share the same cultural codes. If the audience is framed within other social position, alternative decoding and reception is possible.²¹²

In conclusion, Hall systemizes three hypothetical positions of decoding. The first one is the *dominant-hegemonic code*, which transmits ‘preferred meanings.’ The second one relates to a *negotiated code*, which accepts the hegemonic position, but operates as a mixture between adaptation and opposition within specific circumstances. The last one is an *oppositional code*, which implies that receivers understand the preferred encoding, but decode in contrary ways. Thus, the “‘politics of signification’ – the struggle in discourse” can emerge.²¹³

From a broader perspective it can be noted that Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding tradition shares certain aspects with Umberto Eco’s semiotic work, which had already in 1960’s emphasized that a text is *open, unfinished* and its interpretation is multilayered and predetermined by the *competences* and the *cultural encyclopaedia* of the reader.²¹⁴ Similarly, the hermeneutics tradition within reception studies has taken even further the role of the audiences as active producers of textual meaning.

Hall’s communication model of encoding/decoding as a medium for the construction of ‘preferred meanings’ was challenged by another approach also originating within the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. Paul Willis tacitly

²¹¹ Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding” in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 169

²¹² *Ibid.*, 163-173.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 172-3.

²¹⁴ See also Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington – London: Indiana University Press, 1979), *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990)

questioned Hall's stress on ideology and interpellation by using notions of embodiment and emplacement. Willis argued that working class actors are embodied and emplaced in concrete social settings, which they negotiate with what he later defined as 'sensuous knowing.'²¹⁵ In response, Hall has reconsidered the behaviourist model of the audience as a blank subject and moved towards the notion of the 'active audience.'²¹⁶

Hall's encoding/decoding has also become the theoretical basis for David Morley's ethnographic approach towards conducting audience research.²¹⁷ Morley's work is based on the hypothesis that decoding varies by socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, class, race and related cultural frameworks. One of his central concerns is to oppose the textualist approach towards media perception, which envisages that meaning is given *a priori* as inscribed in the text. Thus, he recognizes the active role of the audiences in the production of meanings. Morley demonstrates the complexity of the encounters between texts and viewers, which are determined by social structures and other texts. As Ien Ang further detects "textual meanings do not reside in the texts themselves: a certain text can come to mean different things depending on the interdiscursive context in which viewers interpret it."²¹⁸

Chris Rojek observes that while the encoding/decoding model "expressed Hall's concern with how ideology 'cuts' into language and through this interpellates subjectivity" it has been widely and "mistakenly" seen as a contribution to mass communications research *per se*.²¹⁹ Still, regarding Hall's input to communication and reception studies, this sub-chapter will question the relevance of the model in the context of shifting media landscape. Hall's communication theory of encoding/decoding has emerged in the settings of a mass media dominated by one-way channels of transmission between producers and audiences, such as television. Taking into account the consequent technological transformations and the emergence of open-ended interactive media (allowing for decentralized discourse formation) it becomes reasonable to interrogate the application of this communication model within the novel

²¹⁵ Chris Rojek, "Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School," in *Cultural Theory: Classical and Contemporary Positions*, ed. Tim Edwards (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 79-80.

²¹⁶ The encoding/decoding model originally presented by Hall in 1973 has been restated in three more versions.

²¹⁷ Morley's empirical research carried out in 1980 used as a case study the British news programme *Nationwide*.

²¹⁸ Ien Ang, "On the Politics of Empirical Audience Research" in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 177.

²¹⁹ Chris Rojek, "Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School," 74.

media circuit. Thus, considering the open-ended character of participatory media, this paper proposes that Hall's model can be re-thought into a chain-system of constant *encoding-decoding-encoding*, characterized by novel processes of generation of meaning at the receiving end.

For instance, in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006) Henry Jenkins expands the understanding of interactivity to a mode of participatory culture that does not primarily signify a technological revolution; rather it is a cultural shift, altering the relation between author and audience and suggesting decentralization of cultural production and opinion formation.²²⁰ Contemporary audiences find online possibilities for communication, creativity, and art beyond the authority of traditional informational and cultural gatekeepers (publishers, museums, galleries, newspapers, radio, television, and Hollywood), which have been displaced by digital and social media. In these cultural and media settings, Jenkins discusses the role of popular culture in emerging political communities. Blogging, for example, as a form of social expression explains the anti-spin power that interactive medium possesses through the presentation of the actual multi-faceted nature of many topics – and the fact that it is the opinions of the masses emerging in opposition to mainstream media. For instance, according to Jenkins, the web portals Moveon.org and Meetup.com, lead back to the alternative media movement, to people's radio, underground newspapers, activist zines and early web activism, and the emergence of the "indy" media in the rise of Seattle protests.²²¹ Through the notion of *Photoshop for democracy* (user-generated images that often map themes from popular culture onto political campaigns) Jenkins, describes the way in which participation across all media (that he defines as *transmedia storytelling*) allows for viable political activism. The range of examples of the 'politics' of fandom culture includes such initiatives as the virtual presidential elections in *The Sims* online community Alphaville, that have attracted 'real' international media attention; and Moveon.org's campaign "Bush in 30 Seconds" (later extended into "Obama in 30 Seconds") encouraging the production of user-generated anti-commercials. Drawing upon Piere Lévy's *Collective Intelligence* (2000), Jenkins argues that these "sometimes treacherous spaces to "play" with citizenship and democracy" can after all teach principles of deliberation and civic responsibility. Jenkins insists that this

²²⁰ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 222.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 220.

kind of user-generated content and mass dispersion is a serious act of citizenship.²²² Thus, his thesis resonates with Nick Stevensons' concept of *cultural citizenship*, which he uses in order to articulate the democratic potential of media participation and media literacy.

Moreover, the emancipatory role of (digital) media has been also a central motive within the work of Manuel Castells, which has gained a 'prophetic' character from the perspective of the Arab Spring uprisings that have employed the networking mobilization of social media. Castells' *Information Age* trilogy and *The Power of Identity* (1997), in particular, deal with the construction of collective "resistance identities" challenging the nation-state, which have the potential to develop into "project identities" aiming at social transformations.²²³ Castells' contribution brings out the reflection that structures and identities are constructed in the intersection between multiple global, local and structural forces, while the cultural codes of the information age allow for change in power relations. As a result we experience a twofold process: media and technological transformations provide actors with the opportunity to meet and engage in collective actions, and at the same time "the logic and the organization of electronic media frame and structure politics."²²⁴ Thus, Castells argues that media transformations have empowered people not only to connect and organize themselves easier, but also to produce meanings and different representations of the world. Since representation is distributed within the network, the structural difference of the network results in the construction of new subjects and novel representations: "these networks do more than organizing activity and sharing information. They are the actual producers and distributors of cultural codes."²²⁵ Castells' broader observation on our culture is that it "transcends and includes the diversity of historically transmitted systems of representation: the culture of *real virtuality* where make-believe is belief in the making."²²⁶

Recognizing the pitfalls of the rhetoric hype on the democratic potential of new media (and as a direct critique on Jenkins' take on media participation), Nico Carpentier proposes a theory on audience participatory activities, which diversifies between

²²² Ibid., 206-239.

²²³ Castells' multiple examples encompass the Zapatista movement, environmentalist, feminist and gay communities.

²²⁴ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Volume II*, (Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 312.

²²⁵ Ibid., 362.

²²⁶ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society: The Information Age Economy, Society and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 375.

dimensions of “participation ‘in’ the media” and “participation ‘through’ the media” – correspondingly, “content-related participation” and “structural participation.”²²⁷ The first definition stands for either more ‘active’ participation of non-professionals in the production of media output (supported by three conditions: access to, interaction with and participation in the media organization), or more ‘passive’ participatory practices of interaction with media content; the latter, can be understood as participation in society through media, which entails participation in power-dynamics and decision-making processes.²²⁸ Thus, Carpentier also criticizes Jenkins’ thesis on convergence (in terms of fusion between top-down/corporate and bottom-up/grassroots media productions), claiming that:

(...) the convergence argument also seems to be investing into a set of commercialized media worlds, which tend to homogenize ‘the media’ and hegemonise media’s tendency towards commodification (...) the locus of control of many of the interfaces that facilitate and structure these participatory process, remains firmly in the hands of companies that are outside the participatory process.²²⁹

Carpentier makes a vital ‘macro’ point on the structural organization of (global) media industries, echoing early Frankfurt School’s concerns with the commodification of cultural mass production into a culture industry. Still, what seems more relevant within the scope of this dissertation is his ‘micro’ distinction between active/passive dimensions of participation with media content. In this sense, it can be presumed that ‘playing’ with the medium and generating content (especially as a creative process) carries the connotation of an ‘active’ participation in comparison with social media involvement, where interaction could be reduced to rather ‘passive’ participatory functions, such as ‘Like,’ ‘Share,’ ‘Comment’; or, as Jean Baudrillard has put it from his prominent dystopian perspective:

In fact, the interactive mass is still a mass, with all the characteristics of a mass, simply reflecting itself on both sides of the screen. But the screen is not a mirror (...) there is no other side of the screen. No depth – just a surface. No hidden face – just an interface.²³⁰

²²⁷ Nico Carpentier, “Contextualising Author-Audience Convergences: ‘New’ Technologies Claims’ to Increased Participation, Novelty and Uniqueness.” In *Cultural Studies* (Vol. 25, Nos. 4-5 July – September 2011, 517-533), 519-520.

²²⁸ Ibid., 521.

²²⁹ Ibid., 527.

²³⁰ Jean Baudrillard, “The Virtual Illusion: Or the Automatic Writing of the World” in *Theory, Culture, Society* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications Vol.12, 1995), 101.

Departing from here, the next section will suggest further that audience ‘active’ participation with (interactive) creative mediums could allow for critical engagement and facilitation of transcultural processes. Moreover, the *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle can serve as model of active audience reception, co-creative interaction and translation of symbolic content. This also could imply processes of *trans-coding*, which open the potential for (co-)creative transculturation.

3.3.2 Critical and creative audience participation

From an art historical perspective, the relationship between interactive medium and viewer’s participation can be dated back to the 1930’s, as argued by Dieter Daniels.²³¹ In 1932 Bertolt Brecht makes his influential critical call for change of radio’s monologic character:

Change this apparatus over from distribution to communication...By submitting ever persistent, incessant suggestions for the improved use of the apparatus for the general public, we have to rock the social foundations of this apparatus, to discredit its use for the benefits of a few.²³²

Thus, Daniels poses the question if interactivity should be understood as technology or rather as ideology. Moreover, Dieter Daniels finds a direct link between interactivity and the creative energies of the avant-garde movements during this period. For instance, surrealist poetry introduced the practice of collective authorship; while Italian Futurism with its fascination with technology and machines appealed to the masses and opened new creative spaces, which involved spectators’ participation. In the 1950’s Kinetic art and Op-Art enabled early forms of interactivity by demanded audiences’ participation within the construction of the artwork. In 1960’s and 1970’s various art movements, such as Allan Kaprow’s Happening, Fluxus and Performance transformed the viewer into a participant actively involved in the creative processes. Moreover, the 1960’s aesthetic programme of interaction between artist, audience and artwork, can be conceptualised through John Cage’s concept of *intermedia* designed as an open-ended audio-visual aesthetic experience. In this sense, as Dieter Daniels notes, Cage had

²³¹ Dieter Daniels “Strategies of Interactivity” in Christa Sommerer, Lakhmi C. Jain, Laurent Mignonneau (Eds.): *The Art and Science of Interface and Interaction Design*, (Studies in Computational Intelligence, Volume 141) (Berlin Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 2008), 27–62.

²³² *Ibid.*, 30.

already created the open work of art, before Umberto Eco's articulation in 1962.²³³ The ideological background of 1960's interactive turn aimed at departure from elitist bourgeois 'high' culture and shifting the role of the spectator towards becoming a co-creator. Blurring the boundary between art production and art reception has multiple parallels with 1968 political activists demand for consumers to take over the production means. Thus, artistic approaches towards interactivity emerged as a form of critique on passive cultural consumerism (enforced by mass-media reception).²³⁴ In this direction, could be also mentioned the earliest forms of Video Art (Nam June Paik in the US and Wolf Vostell in Germany), which recontextualized the TV set from the domestic space into video sculptures in gallery settings in order to redefine the passive character of the television medium. The 1980's video culture and the 1990's Internet euphoria put a rather technological twist on interactivity, which digital media, Net Art and Virtual Reality environments have extended further. Oliver Grau's *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion* (2003), for instance, thoroughly discusses the relation between interface, aesthetic experience and interactivity. Grau retells the art history of illusionary vision from the perspective of media history and traces the origins of kinaesthetic and immersive art back to antiquity.²³⁵ With this regard, interactivity should be also understood in terms of corporeal audience participation – a topic, which the following subsection will exploit further. Overall, within this fast-track Media Arts history, we can also observe a transition from *multimedia* installations at the end of the last millennium towards *transmedia* performativity today.

After the 1990's interaction (outside of its technological connotation) has been also understood in terms of *relational aesthetics*. Nicholas Bourriaud coins the notion in 1998 in order to describe artistic practices based on human relations and social contexts, such as community art where participants collaborate in the construction of a shared environment, often outside the gallery space.²³⁶ Clare Bishop's *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012) argues, however, that Bourriaud's theory overestimates the open-ended inter-subjective character of such participatory practices, since they are initially conditioned by politicized scenarios and systems of display.²³⁷ The outlined discourse points out relevant coordinates for

²³³ Ibid., 35.

²³⁴ Ibid., 33-37.

²³⁵ Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

²³⁶ Nicolas Bourriaud. *Relational Esthetics* (Dijon: les Presses du réel, 2002).

²³⁷ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participation and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).

understanding the dimensions of audience participation, still its conceptual framework expands beyond the topic of audience-medium interaction as the scope of this section. Thus, the discussion will shift back to exploring the cross-cultural potential of transmedia productions and the creative role of the participants in *trans-coding* meaning across media platforms.

A recent study on the cultural function and value of European transmedia independents suggests that transmedia forms (involving diverse medium specificities) foster exchange between signs systems (texts, concepts, ideas), which generate the emergence of innovation and cultural plurality. Following Juri Lotman's approach to culture as semiosphere, the authors argue that

transmedia practices facilitate inter-semiotic translations at all levels of cultures, which conditions increased dialogism and the feasible evolution of these cultures (...) For instance, stories or other elements (images, music, phrases, characters, represented relationships, etc.) in films are translated or recycled into other media or modalities, then the result is not only pluralization in terms of forms but also that which can be represented and communicated, whereas each new way brings about an expansion in terms of the heterogeneity of meanings available to participants of the particular semiosphere.²³⁸

Thus, it can be further deduced that if transmedial expressions circulate transculturally encoded meanings within a participatory loop of *encoding-decoding-encoding*, the media (re)production of a transcultural semiosphere (and imaginary), could foster translation of (trans-)cultural codes. Consequently, this can entail practices of *trans-coding* meanings across media platforms, which potentially could trigger cross-cultural understanding. The central problems of such theorization would still be: the structural impossibility of overcoming the digital divide; and the pervasive practice of employing transmedia as a media markets' multi-platform marketing mechanism, rather than as an independent creative approach (which nevertheless cannot restructure market dynamics.) Still, the optimistic 'speculation' that transcendence of semiotic and symbolic material across media platforms, can allow for critical and creative *trans-coding*, carries the potential for the emergence of artistic expressions, which constitute co-creative transculturation.

²³⁸ Indrek Ibrus and Maarja Ojamaa "What is the cultural function and value of European transmedia independents?" in *International Journal of Communication* Vol. 8 (online 2014), 2283-86. (Accessed 1 March 2016).

Certain attempts in this direction could be recognized within emerging participatory and community art platforms oriented towards engaging European citizens and youth. Such initiative is the project *U-CARE: Urban Culture Against Racism in Europe* (2012-2014) that was co-organised by eleven organizations in eight European countries (Germany, England, France, Netherlands, Greece, Italy, Hungary and Romania). The project's peer coaching approach uses urban culture and media (music, dance, theatre, video, and graffiti) in order to combat discrimination and racism in Europe and deconstruct negative stereotypes. The participants, European youth with diverse cultural background, were educated as junior coaches via seminars and summer school activities. Subsequently, their role was to organize workshops and public events in order to disseminate further the anti-racist/anti-discrimination mission of the project. While its general dynamics employ *relational aesthetics*, certain activities allow for active media participation within the production of media output (or participation at micro level referencing back Nico Carpentier's distinction between participatory functions). The video platform of the project, for instance, offers to a certain extent the possibility for the creation of user-generated content. Still, the pre-given format of (media) participation and used media specificities could be democratised further towards allowing participants to interact into a co-creative cycle of *encoding-decoding-encoding*. Thus, at this stage, the expectation for co-creative projects, which depend on audiences' critical and active media participation for the construction of a transcultural European imaginary, stays open.

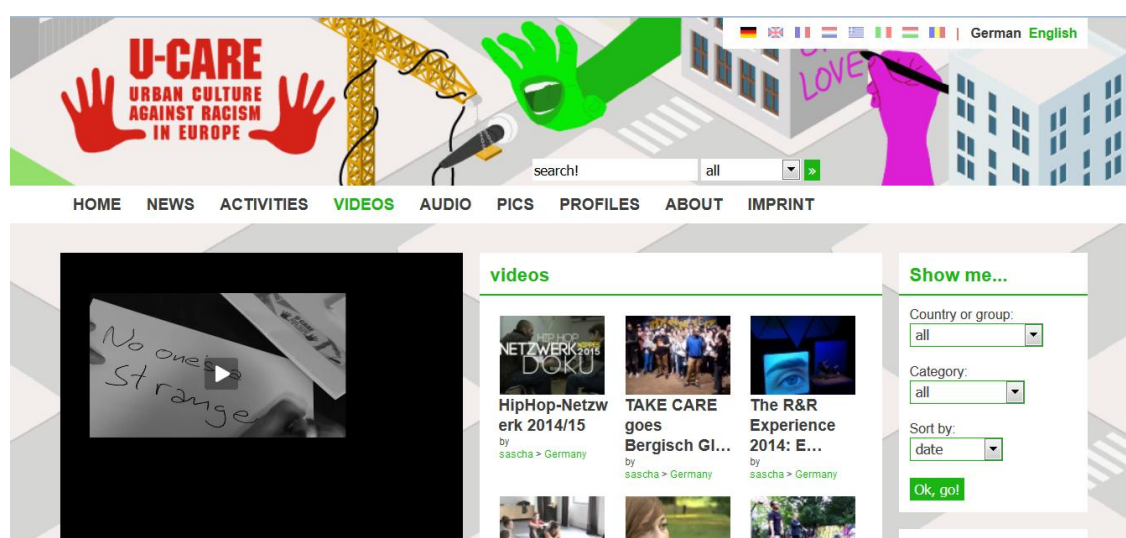


Fig. 17. *U-CARE: Urban Culture Against Racism in Europe* (2012-2014) <http://www.u-care.org>

3.4 Embodied transculturation

This section will argue that embodied affiliation with culture emerges as a relevant modality of transcultural aesthetics and creative transcendence of cultural boundaries. Since cultural engagement could be acquired through embodied aesthetic experiences and sensory involvement (such as rhythm in music or montage in film) and corporeal participation in the (co-)creative process, transculturation could be studied as a modality of somaesthetic experiences.

For instance, in the context of artistic creativity related to Europe, could be mentioned Peter Greenaway's short *The European Showerbath* (2004) from the cinematic anthology *Visions of Europe*, which re-imagines the EU as a 'naked' collective corporeal experience. *The European Showerbath* incorporates EU economic and political history via flag-painted flesh of older, younger, fatter and thinner bodies parodying the power dynamics between the first fifteen European member states. The running warm water stands for the overflow of benefits that each country joins enthusiastically. Eventually, the European community *idyll* comes to an end with the last drops of the warm shower. The short exploits the creative dynamics of embodied cross-cultural interaction, while it does not necessarily aim to generate a process of transculturation via corporeal engagement. A more explicit attempt in this direction is the cross-cultural film *The Pillow Book* (1996), which exposes Greenaway's aesthetic tradition of connecting transculturation and embodiment into a *parfait mélange*, as the leitmotif of the film entails.

The Pillow Book pays homage to a 10th century diary written by the Japanese court lady Sei Shonagon. In correspondence, the film reveals the contemporary story of the Japanese-born fashion model Nagiko, who lives in Hong Kong driven by her fetishes for calligraphy and carnal pleasures. Nagiko's search for interconnecting both of her passions meets her with the British translator Jerome and his lover and a former publisher of her own father Yaji-san. *The Pillow Book*'s visual language builds on layering traditional Japanese iconography, modern Chinese and western images and text, as well as visual codes from film, painting and calligraphy into a polysensory fusion. The juxtaposition of cultural references, multiple media textures, multilayered and split-screen compositions creates the sensation of a cross-cultural exchange at a non-verbal and corporeal level. In this sense, the notion of embodiment could be traced

both in the representation of the protagonists' (nude) bodies, as well as in the conceptual structuring of the film frames. With this regard, Holly Willis has noted that Greenaway's non-conventional filmmaking "avoids the tyranny of the frame by breaking the rectangular frame of traditional cinema into numerous sub-frames, creating a form of subversion through multiplication and collision."²³⁹



Fig. 18. Peter Greenaway, *The European Showerbath* (DVD, 5 min, 2004)
<http://petergreenaway.org.uk/euroshower.htm>

Following similar conceptual dimensions, this section will map the paradigmatic shift within media and cultural studies towards performativity and embodiment. Next, the text will argue that cross-cultural affiliation could be constituted via the somatic diapasons of artistic processes. Thus, this part of the dissertation will discuss and interconnect two levels of embodied aesthetic experiences – representation of corporeality and affective involvement with the sensory dimensions of a certain creative medium.

3.4.1 From representation to embodiment – the shift from the 'linguistic' towards the 'performative' turn

In recent years the humanities scholarship has been marked by a 'sensuous turn,' which has influenced media and communication studies and theories of representation. A number of authors have suggested beyond representational approaches, oriented towards exploration of perceptual and corporeal experiences. For instance, Nigel Thrift's *Non-Representational Theory* (2008) has proposed an experiential rather than representational perspective to social science and humanities. Thrift has suggested that

²³⁹ Holly Willis, *New Digital Cinema: Reinventing the Moving Image* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 39.

performativity and embodied knowledge as practices of subjectification are replacing representation and interpretation. According to him “all solutions are responsive, relational, dialogical”²⁴⁰ therefore it is relevant to approach the world in its immediate invention, rather as being reflected. Thrift uses dance and “dancing identity”²⁴¹ as metaphors for the constitution of subjectivity as embodied expression and affective interaction. Specifically, it can be observed that in the context of participatory media and interactive art, research endeavours have centred on audiences’ performativity and co-creative engagement.

At the same time, in the domain of art reception, textually based analysis has been already challenged by Susan Sontag’s essay *Against Interpretation* (1964), which has marked the path towards the ‘participatory turn.’ Sontag’s renowned ending phrase “in place of hermeneutics we need erotics of art”²⁴² stands for a critique on pseudo-intellectualized perception at the expense of a sensory understanding of art. Her work strikes the irrelevance of the distinction between form and content and proclaims that the meaning is dynamically produced between the artwork and its receiver.

As far as media transformations have offered new modes of audience perception and comprehension, the creative work can be seen as a processual experience of interactive artistic communication, rather than as an object. As Roy Ascott has written, the role of the artists is not to create and express content or meaning, but to create the context in which the recipient constructs her/his own experiences and meanings.²⁴³ Therefore, reception studies on interactive media and art have rediscovered phenomenological research methodologies and specifically, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1954) which focuses on pre-reflective perception and embodiment.²⁴⁴ Building upon Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of direct experiences, Vivian Sobchack has emerged as one of the most ‘visceral’ authors whose work studies the sense-making capacities of the lived body. As she has put it in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (2004):

²⁴⁰ Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 147.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation” in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (Penguin Group, 1964).

²⁴³ Roy Ascott, *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

²⁴⁴ See also Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), based on Edmond Husserl’s and Martin Heidegger’s philosophies developing Hegel’s work on phenomenology as an interpretative study of experience.

Making conscious sense from our carnal senses is something we do wherever we are watching a film, moving about in our daily lives and complex worlds, or even thinking abstractly about the enigmas of moving images, cultural formations, and the meanings and values that inform our existence.²⁴⁵

While outlining the medial transformations from film to interactive art (and in reference to Roy Ascott's views on the processual character of cyberculture), Ryszard W. Kluszczyński observes that interactivity allows for creativity beyond the representation of a readymade, finalized and *a priori* given world, but rather the construction of a new reality and a communication system between the work and the receiver. As he argues further, at that point the deconstructionist philosophy of Derrida has become a common methodological matrix for analysing interactive art, since the artwork is understood not as a fixed content, but as the very process of its formation and negotiation of possible meanings. Then a relevant frame of reception is the "active interpretation" model, resembling a game and promoting a transformative activity oriented towards "nonfinality" and "nonultimacy."²⁴⁶ Thus, it can be concluded that the artwork as a communicative process requires comprehension in the form of co-participation and co-creation of meanings.

Moreover, according to Margaret Morse, the medial shift towards active participation has influenced the maintenance of identity and the sense of belonging to a shared culture. Morse recognizes television (with addressing the viewer with *we* and *you*) as an interim phase towards immersion in the virtual world of cyberculture, which allows for entrance "inside the box and the screen. The interactive user is an *I* or a player in discursive space and time."²⁴⁷ Therefore, she acknowledges the identification with a virtual protagonist as embodiment and transmission of culture:

[w]hile interactivity is often understood as "control" over machines, it could also be a way of inhabiting "you" produced by the virtual address of television. Then, post-televisional machines are charged with the production of "dequotative 'I'" and, hence, with the full range of subjectivity in cultural transmission.²⁴⁸

Morse borrows the notion of "dequotative 'I'" from the anthropologist Greg Urban, who has studied the identification with a social role as a passage through degrees

²⁴⁵ Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

²⁴⁶ Ryszard W. Kluszczyński, "From Film to Interactive Art: Transformations in Media Arts" in *Media Art Histories*, ed. Oliver Grau (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007).

²⁴⁷ Margaret Morse, *Virtualities: television, media art and cyberculture*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 4.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 5.

of embodiment from a third-person narration of a story to acquiring that role by speaking the words of another. Furthermore, she discusses the distribution of subjectivity and agency to technology and computer programmes (e.g. interactive interfaces), which results in a realm of *performativity* for the viewer. Therefore, she makes a distinction between media (such as literature or film fiction) that *represent* a world which is past and elsewhere and media (such as computer interaction) that *present* a world which is in a virtual relation or simultaneous to our own. This coincidence of here and now in the second case brings about “utterances or performances (that) include images meant to shape or invent a world, not represent it. When the simultaneity of interactivity causes instant feedback between images and the world, “an inversion takes place in what was once called representation: neither image nor the world is “first,” and each is likely to shape the other.”²⁴⁹ Then, the construction of subjectivity in electronic culture happens as an extension of the body, or a process which involves reception with the body itself.

While tracing the relationship between identity and the ‘technologies’ of representation, it should be mentioned that Stuart Hall has recognized a similar shift (from a linguistic towards a kind of performative turn) within the poststructuralist philosophy of Michel Foucault and his conceptualizations of the subject. In Foucault’s early work the body is produced exclusively as an effect of discursive formations. Discourses construct subject positions through their ‘modalities of enunciation’ such as discipline and power. In his later philosophy though, a distinctive shift towards recognizing a “corresponding production of subjective response (and thus the capacity and apparatus of subjectivity) from the side of the subject”²⁵⁰ can be grasped. In this later stage of Foucault’s work it can be observed that practices of self-constitution and self-recognition coexist with practices of discursive and disciplinary regulation. Thus, according to Hall, Foucault has produced “a discursive *phenomenology* of the subject (...) and a genealogy of the *technologies of the self*.”²⁵¹

To a certain extent, Hall’s remark reminds of the hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur, who discovers a mutual belonging between linguistic interpretation and embodied experience:

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 21.

²⁵⁰ Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who needs ‘Identity’?” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 12.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 14.

On the one hand hermeneutics is built on the basis of phenomenology and thus preserves that from which it nevertheless differs: *phenomenology remains the indispensable presupposition of hermeneutics*. On the other hand, phenomenology is not able to establish itself without a *hermeneutic presupposition*.²⁵²

This approach clearly indicates the conceptual dimensions of a method for tackling the production of subjectivity in between representation (as a discursive and linguistic standpoint) and embodiment (as a subjective experiential capacity).

3.4.2 Transculturation via embodied aesthetic experiences

Attempts for drawing the interconnection between crossings of cultural boundaries and embodied experiences have been usually mentioned in relation to ethnographic cinema and visual anthropology. For instance, David MacDougall's *Transcultural Cinema* (1998) and *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography and the Senses* (2005) slightly imply the somatic and kinaesthetic dimensions of ethnographic film and photography. Through MacDougall's lens, embodiment can be understood as mediated images of body parts, gestures and postures, which can relate to physical sensations.²⁵³ This dissertation, however, conceptualizes embodied affiliation with culture not only as the *representation* of corporal referents, but also as the constitution (or *presentation* in Margaret Morse's terms) of immediate aesthetic experiences which can trigger processes of transculturation on behalf of the beholder.

In *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (2000) Laura Marks suggests a sounder connection between cinematic languages, visual textures and intercultural experiences drawing upon theories of embodied spectatorship, phenomenology and feminist criticism. In extension of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's distinction between haptic and optical space, Marks proposes the term *haptic visuality* in order to claim that vision itself can be tactile.²⁵⁴ According to her theory: "in intercultural cinema, haptic images are often used in an explicit critique of visual mastery, in the search for ways to bring the image closer to the body and the other senses...Ultimately phenomenology can account for how the body encodes power

²⁵² Paul Ricoeur, *Phenomenology and Hermeneutics*, Noûs, Vol. 9, No. 1, Symposium Papers to be Read at the Meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Association in Chicago, Illinois, April 24-26, 1975 (Mar. 1975), 85.

²⁵³ David MacDougall, *Transcultural Cinema*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 270.

²⁵⁴ Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), xi.

relations somatically”²⁵⁵ Moreover she claims that, “one could say that intercultural spectatorship is the meeting of two different sensoria, which may or may not intersect. Spectatorship is thus an act of sensory translation of cultural knowledge.”²⁵⁶

Laura Marks suggests that Deleuze’s conception of *time-image* and Henri Bergson’s understanding of image as multisensory (than just visual), opens a discussion on the multisensory diapasons of cinema. Marks explores further Bergson’s theory of memory as embodied in the senses and claims that intercultural cinema engages the viewer through haptic visuality, which triggers physical memories of smell, touch and taste. Thus, Marks suggests a theory of auratic, embodied and mimetic representation. Furthermore, she outlines the difference between forms of experimental, mainstream and intercultural cinema in the fact that the latter emphasizes the *social* character of embodied experience: “the body is a source not just of individual but of cultural memory.”²⁵⁷

While Marks’ study still insists on the representational make-up of multisensory embodied experiences in intercultural cinema, this dissertation proposes a beyond representational approach towards generating cross-cultural affiliation via creative media incarnations. Then, media induced affiliation with culture could be understood as an instant spectator’s experience of embodied transculturation. If employing Margaret Morse’s rhetoric, this perspective can be translated into the statement that artistic expressions and creative media specificities not simply *represent* transculturality as a narratively portrayed reality, but rather *present* an immediate aesthetic experience of transculturation.

In this line of thoughts, I agree with the editors of *Transcultural Montage* (2013), Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev, who claim that cultural boundaries could be transcended via disruptive montage and “the destabilization and rupture of our common-sense perception.”²⁵⁸ According to Suhr and Willerslev, the role of montage in transcending boundaries of culture can be used to push social theory beyond the visible into the invisible, since “montage offers a tool for making “present by a certain absence” (Merleau-Ponty 2000:187) the invisible ground of social life and human

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 151-2.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 153.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., xiii.

²⁵⁸ Rane Willerslev and Christian Suhr, “Introduction. Montage as an Amplifier of Invisibility” in Suhr and Willerslev (eds.) *Transcultural Montage* (Berghahn Books, 2013), 2.

perception.”²⁵⁹ Montage, then extends the potential for transcultural perception by “shattering commonsense understanding of the constitution of the world.”²⁶⁰ Suhr and Willerslev’s discussion of Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov’s constructivist montage and Trinh T. Minh-ha’s use of montage as a deconstruction device offers a conceptual framework, which expands comprehension on how montage and other disruptive devices could be employed in breaking “the mimetic dogma of the humanized camera” in ethnographic film by insisting that “using film to reveal the invisible aspects of social life depends crucially on maintaining a tension between a strong sense of reality and its occasional, and therefore only then effective, disruption through montage.”²⁶¹ On a similar note, Julia T. S. Binter suggests that Dziga Vertov’s concept of *radioglaz*,²⁶² as an experimental fusion between vision and sound, “tests the limits of transcultural montage.”²⁶³

It can be argued further that the constructivists principles of early Soviet montage such as Vertov’s experiments on sound-vision interaction and Eisenstein’s *intellectual montage* as a collision of independent shots, have reached their full affective potential in contemporary installation art. Specifically, multi-channel audio-video installations have unlocked the space for a dialectic relationship between autonomous images and their relational rhythmic and sensory qualities into affective moving images. As Eisenstein has written in *Nonindifferent Nature: Film and the Structure of Things* (1987 tr.)²⁶⁴, the emotional tension and affective nature of cinematic elements belong not to their singular nature, but to the mutual organization and transformation of elements. I would suggest further that the notion of *intellectual montage* as a generation of new (visual) connotations through combining pre-existing meanings (imagery), can be understood as synonymous to practices of *trans-coding*.

For instance, the double-channel video installation *European Union Mayotte* (2015), by the Danish activists artists collective SUPERFLEX, exploits the dialogical potential of two screens and the contrapuntal correlation between imagery

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 9.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev, “Can Film Show the Invisible? The Work of Montage in Ethnographic Filmmaking” in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (June 2012), 282-301.

²⁶² *Radioglaz* (radio-eye) – an experimental sound technique which relied on silence or on-site recorded sound.

²⁶³ Julia T. S. Binter, “Radioglaz and the Global City. Possibilities and Constraints of Experimental Montage” in Suhr and Willerslev (ed.) *Transcultural Montage* (Berghahn Books, 2013), 183

²⁶⁴ Sergei Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature: Film and the Structure of Things*, (tr. Herbert Marshal), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

and sound. The installation juxtaposes two projections – a smaller frontal screening of an empty white boat, floating through the ocean on choppy waves; and a larger backward projection showing people’s labour of producing a small fibreglass fishing boat. The co-existence of both screenings – one rather abstracted as showing an anonymous boat and no land in sight, and the other more ‘narrative’ as representing human work – entails feelings of unfulfilled journeys and loss. The monotonous routine of people’s effort is emphasized by the persistent beat of an asynchronous hammering sound, which evokes expectation of danger. The composition of sonic and moving-image layers constructs the affective diapasons of the work. The installation reflects on the hope for new life at the front border of the EU as it follows everyday life on Anjouan – an island situated next to Mayotte, which is one of the four Comoros Islands in the Indian Ocean and a previous French Colony until 1975. A French overseas department since 2011, Mayotte has been acknowledged as a part of the European Union since 2014, making it EU’s outermost region and an entry point to the EU. Thus, people from Anjouan and the surrounding islands embark on dangerous and illegal journeys with the hope of reaching European coast. Due to extreme weather conditions more than 50 000 migrants have not survived the deadly journeys, making news media address Mayotte as *France’s migrant cemetery*. The artists Jakob Fenger, Rasmus Nielsen, and Bjørnstjerne Christiansen collaborate since 1993 as members of SUPERFLEX. Their work often advocates for cross-cultural politics and expresses severe criticism on social and economic inequality in a global context.

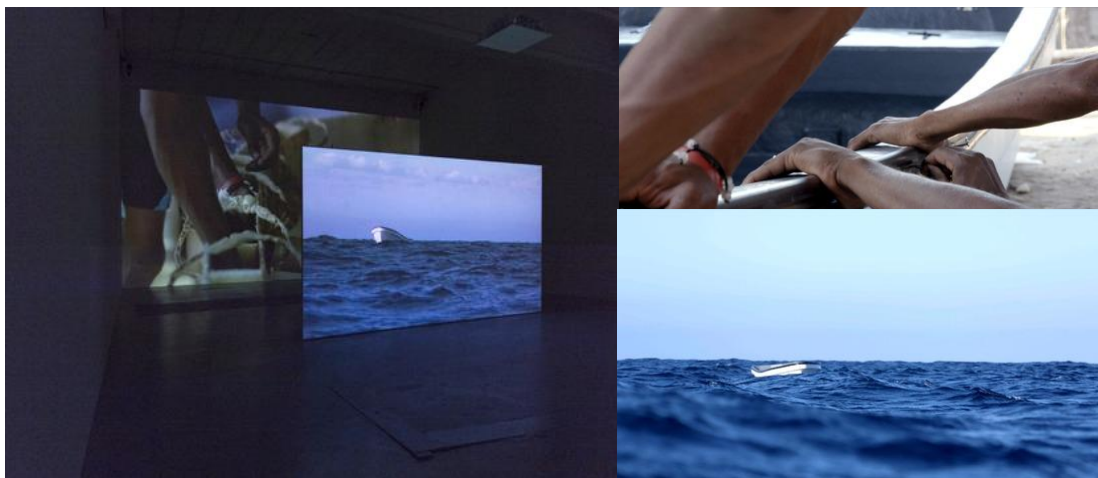


Fig. 19. *SUPERFLEX, European Union Mayotte* (2015) – double-channel video installation
http://superflex.net/tools/european_union_mayotte

In the realm of digital and interactive arts, the notion of *haptic vision* reappears in Mark Hansen's *New Philosophy for New Media* (2004), whose novelty counts on revisioning old Bergsonian discourse and claims a different angle on Bergson than the one adopted by Deleuze. Hansen uses the notion of *affectivity* (based on Bergson's argument that affect and memory shape perception) as the capacity of the body to experience itself as more than itself and introduces the power of creativity in the sensorimotor body. Since in digital media the (real) referent is lost, the body appears as the concrete (material) instance that frames the image. If analogue photography and film represent and tend to mediate an 'objective' reality, in digital regime, Hansen writes, the image can be manipulated, thus it cannot function any longer as a reference to a 'true' reality. Then, according to Mark Hansen, the bodily experience is itself the medium of the work: the body is "the place, where the self-differing of media gets concretized."²⁶⁵ This statement resonates with the Deleuzean notion that "the brain is the screen"²⁶⁶ rather than offering a strikingly different perspective on Bergson's philosophy as Hansen claims. Hansen elaborates on the embodied aesthetics of new media by presenting the notion of the *digital image* which is produced by body-brain activity. A viable argument that Hansen introduces is that, then the bodily awareness, the intellectual event and the visual perception of the image become inseparable. While Hansen's emphasis on the 'newness' of new media presents a direct critique on Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media* (2001), I would rather agree with Manovich who argues that the interactivity of new media derives from traditional art forms. For instance, with sculpture and architecture, the viewer has to move her whole body to experience the spatial structure. Film cinematography and montage actively guide the spectator to switch from one part of a frame to another and to create the meaningful connections between single images. Manovich concludes, that when using the concept of *interactive media* exclusively in relation to computer-based media, there is a danger that we will interpret *interaction* literally, equating it with physical interaction between a user and a media object (pressing a button, choosing a link, moving the body), at the expense of psychological and intellectual interaction.²⁶⁷

New media theories, however, certainly lack in investigating the role of affect within the constitution of cross-cultural engagement, which leaves an unnecessary gap

²⁶⁵ Mark Hansen. *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p. 31

²⁶⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Melissa McMuhan, "The Brain Is the Screen: Interview with Gilles Deleuze on "the Time-image"" in *Discourse* 20.3 (1998): 47–55.

²⁶⁷ Lev Manovich. *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 56–57.

between the disciplines of media and cultural studies. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin are among the few whose theory of remediation at least mentions the potential for a visual construction of empathy. Bolter and Grusin have studied the aesthetic experience of identification as a matter of adjusting the parameters of various mediated selves. According to them the immersion into virtual reality (and the identification with fictional characters and avatars) generates a sense of *virtual empathy* and the ability of the viewer to empathise through imagining:

(...) then, the freedom to be oneself is the freedom to become someone (or something) else. Because there is no single, privileged point of view, the self becomes a series of “other” points of view – the intersection of all possible points of view that can be taken in a given space.²⁶⁸

Bolter and Grusin’s thesis relates to Mikhail Epstein’s reading of transculturality as the freedom of being different from others and also from one’s own self and Julia Kristeva’s thesis of imaginatively extending ourselves into the other. It also resonates with Edward Soja’s thirdspace of multiplicity of perspectives. In this sense, it can be assumed that interactive media (similarly to other traditional forms of fiction) provide, but also multiply the possibilities for imaginative identifications, cultural attachments and processes of transculturation. The following chapter will explore as a case study the virtual reality project *The Machine to be Another* (2015) by BeAnotherLab, which is an art investigation on building empathy via embodiment and virtual body extension.

3.5 Conclusions: modalities of cultural and creative trans-coding as transculturalizing strategies

Following Yuri Lotman’s understanding of transcoding as an intrinsic practice for the generation of meanings and creativity, this chapter aimed to reconceptualise transcultural aesthetics as an ongoing praxis of cultural and creative *trans-coding*. Since, Lotman theorizes culture as a *semiosphere* (a synchronic semiotic space), it was further suggested that the constitution of a transcultural imaginary, should be also understood in terms of a transcultural *semiosphere* as the shared semantic space of cross-cultural translation of codes. Moreover, it was proposed that transcultural

²⁶⁸ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 247.

aesthetics is defined by several interrelated communication modalities: representation of transcultural identities as a discursive strategy for negotiation of cultural differences; intertextual and intermedial sampling of cultural repertoires as creative praxis provoking transcultural exchange; co-creative cycle of *encoding-decoding-encoding*, which implies active audience participation in processes of critical and creative transculturation; and embodied cultural affiliation, as a transculturalizing strategy at a non-verbal, sensory and corporeal level.

The first section argued that artistic (re)production of transcultural identities and the creative employment of transcultural repertoires are discursive strategies, which trigger negotiation of cultural differences. Revising Stuart Hall's theory of representation, it should be considered that the constitution of cultural identity happens as a discursive formation. Thus, the 'politics of representation' and the discursive practice of stereotyping are the product of hegemonic and preferred meanings. In opposition, *trans-coding* emerges as a counter-practice of negotiating preferred connotations. While Hall suggests three variables of *trans-coding* (*reversing the stereotype*, *charging negative images with positive meanings*, and *shifting representation from within*), the text proposed as a central argument that negotiation of cultural meanings and *trans-coding* of 'otherness' can be achieved via the representation of transcultural identities. Transcultural identity is constituted via participation in several cultures, which allows for the manifestation of difference within the same personality, as being simultaneously different from others and also from the self (regarding Mikhail Epstein's theory). Drawing upon examples from Fatih Akin's film *The Edge of Heaven*, the section offered two scenarios for *trans-coding*. First, subversion is conveyed via the representation of ambiguous identities *in-between*, who are in a constant process of 'becoming' (such as the film protagonist Nejat, suggested as Fatih Akin's alter ego). In such manner, Akin *trans-codes* identity into a processual construction, which transcends cultural differences into a new, 'third,' transcultural entity. The second scenario involves the representation of *gender trouble* or 'queer' motifs (Lotte and Ayten's relationship), which function as a symbolic crossing of boundaries, and subversion of any form of essentialism. Thus, it was concluded that Akin's cinematic representation of transcultural identities and transcultural dynamics is a critical discursive strategy, which challenges cultural 'othering' and, instead, (re)produces transcultural consciousness. In this sense, the representation of

transcultural identities emerges as a central constituent element of transcultural aesthetics and a creative gesture, which *trans-codes* common perceptions of ‘otherness’.

The second subchapter discussed the artistic process of remixing repertoires in a cross-cultural order as a form of critical and creative *trans-coding* that can trigger processes of transculturation. It was suggested that transcultural aesthetics could be also understood as a creative praxis composed of *trans-coding* functions, such as intertextual and intermedial remixing and recontextualization of repertoires across cultural boundaries. The section explored theoretical perspective on the aesthetics of remixing, DJing and recycling of media content as a common praxis of contemporary cultural and creative production. Moreover, it was argued that recontextualizing and remixing signs can operate as a *trans-coding* mechanism. In this sense, sampling of cultural repertoires as an artistic practice of “cut’n’mix” (in relation to Dick Hebdige’s rhetoric) could also express symbolic resistance. Within the outlined conceptual framework were considered several examples of Banksy’s graffiti, which strike a critical perspective towards the refugee crisis in Europe. His artistic approach involves visual recontextualization of popular motives in order to generate new connotations and, consequently, subvert common perceptions of immigration. Thus, his creative gesture of remixing existing contents can be also understood in terms of critical and creative *trans-coding*. Similarly, the text tackled examples from Fatih Akin’s intertextual and intermedial cinematic DJing, such as stylizing the story of Abraham into an interreligious and transcultural repertoire. Accordingly, it was suggested that within artistic intertextual variations (exemplified by Akin’s work), transculturality can be also understood as the dynamic exchange of signs into a simulacral relationship, whose reference point has been lost in cross-cultural translations. Moreover, the *trans-coding* of cultural repertoires can be employed as a ‘strategic’ creative practice, which aims to (re)produce processes of transculturation. Thus, the second subchapter’s thesis insisted that the creative methods of remixing, reusing and sampling of cultural repertoires can also operate as *transculturalizing* strategies. In this sense, sampling can function as a critical approach of *thirling-as-othering* that allows for a critical “other-than” choice, which speaks through its otherness, as Edward Soja has defined it. Therefore, the creative construction of a ‘third space’ between cultural influences, that sampling allows for, can be understood as a constituent element of transcultural aesthetics.

The third section focused on the participatory aspects of our *convergence culture* (Jenkins, 2006) and the active role of the audience in processes of *trans-coding*

meanings. According to Hall, messages are constructed as polysemic sign systems that can be interpreted in different ways, while media communication also functions as a circuit reproducing a pattern of domination. Hall's communication theory of encoding/decoding is related to one-way channels of transmission between producers and audiences, such as television. Thus, considering the open-ended character of participatory media (where receivers acts as producers who encode new meanings and construct alternative discourses), it was argued that Hall's model can be re-thought into a chain-system of constant *encoding-decoding-encoding*, characterized by novel generation of meanings at the receiving end. Moreover, it was suggested that the *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle can serve as a model of active audience reception, co-creative interaction and translation of symbolic content. With this regard, through the notion of *Photoshop for democracy*, Jenkins, describes the way in which the production of user-generated content allows for viable political activism and teaches principles of deliberation and civic responsibility. Following Nico Carpentier's critique on media convergence and his theory on audience participatory activities, was established a distinction between structural media participation (at a macro level) and content-related participation (as a micro practice). In this sense, it was presumed that 'playing' with the medium and generating critical and creative content carries the connotation of an 'active' participation in comparison with other forms of (social) media involvement, where interaction could be reduced to rather 'passive' participatory functions. Furthermore, the section followed an art historical perspective on media arts and interactivity and the transition towards *transmedia* artistic expressions. As a recent study suggested, transmedia art fosters exchange between signs systems and facilitate inter-semiotic translations at all levels of cultures. In this context, *U-CARE: Urban Culture Against Racism in Europe* (2012 – 2014) was mentioned as an example of active audience participation within the production of transmedia output (as participation at micro level). Thus, it was further proposed that audience 'active' participation with (interactive) creative mediums could enhance critical engagement and facilitation of transcultural processes. Furthermore, the transcendence of semiotic and symbolic material across media platforms could trigger critical and creative *trans-coding*.

The final sub-chapter explored how cultural engagement could be acquired through embodied aesthetic experiences, sensory involvement (such as montage in film) and corporeal participation in the (co-)creative process. Thus, it was argued that

embodied affiliation with culture emerges as a relevant modality of transcultural aesthetics and creative transcendence of cultural boundaries. Specifically, in the field of media and interactive arts, the artwork has transformed into a communicative process and the aesthetic experience is constituted as an extension of the body, or a process which involves reception with the body itself. The discussion interconnected two levels of embodied aesthetic experiences – representation of corporeality and affective involvement with the sensory dimensions of (media) artworks. According to Laura Marks, intercultural cinema engages the viewer through haptic visuality, which triggers physical memories of smell, touch and taste. Then, spectatorship is an act of multisensory translation of cultural knowledge. While Marks' study still insists on a representational paradigm, this sub-chapter proposed a beyond representational approach. Then, embodied affiliation with culture is not only the *representation* of corporal referents, but also the *presentation* (in Margaret Morse's terms) of immediate *affective* aesthetic experience of transculturation. In this sense, Suhr and Willerslev claim that disruptive montage plays a role in expanding transcultural perception. Furthermore, it was argued that the constructivist principles of early Soviet montage, for instance Eisenstein's *intellectual montage* as a generation of new (visual) connotations through combining pre-existing meanings (imagery), can be understood as synonymous to practices of *trans-coding*. Moreover, it was considered that *intellectual montage*, as a collision of independent shots, has reached its full affective potential in contemporary installation art. Specifically, multi-channel audio-video installations have unlocked the space for a dialectic relationship between autonomous images and their relational rhythmic and sensory qualities. A relevant example could be the double-channel video installation *European Union Mayotte* (2015), by the Danish activists artists collective SUPERFLEX, which exploits the dialogical potential of two screens and the contrapuntal correlation between imagery and sound. Moreover, interactive arts provide the possibilities for embodied identification with others, which Bolter and Grusin have recognized as generation of *virtual empathy* and the ability of the viewer to empathise through imagining. In this sense, it can be assumed that cultural attachments and processes of transculturation could be embodied experienced that have the potential to *trans-code* processes of othering at a corporeal level.

With regards to exploring further transcultural aesthetics and modalities of critical and creative *trans-coding*, the next chapters will offer analysis of selected case studies: the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe* (2011-2013), reflecting on

European identity; *Remapping Europe, a Remix Project* (2013), which contests dominant media representations of migration in European societies by re-mixing media and film archives; and the virtual reality project *The Machine to be Another* (2014), which is an art investigation on building empathy via embodiment and virtual body extension.

4. Case study: the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe* (2011 – 2013)

In accordance with the suggested theoretical model and modalities of cultural and creative trans-coding, the following section will explore empirical examples of transcultural aesthetics by taking into consideration the project *United States of Europe* (2011 – 2013). Designed as a platform for European citizens' participation, this initiative directly reflects on social, political and cultural aspects of today's Europe. By involving a range of artistic media (video, photography and interactive installations), the project offers diverse aesthetic possibilities for representing and re-enacting European experiences.

In correspondence with the previous chapter, artistic representation of transcultural identities will be approached as a central constituent element of transcultural aesthetics and a creative gesture, which *trans-codes* common perceptions of cultural 'otherness'. As earlier argued, artistic (re)production of transcultural identities and the creative employment of transcultural repertoires are discursive strategies, which trigger negotiation of cultural differences. According to Stuart Hall's theory of representation, the constitution of cultural identity happens, not outside, but within discourse. Therefore, the 'politics of representation' and the discursive practice of stereotyping are the product of hegemonic and preferred meanings. In opposition, *trans-coding* emerges as a counter-practice to negotiate preferred connotations and generate new meanings. While Hall suggests three variables of *trans-coding* (*reversing the stereotype*, charging *negative* images with *positive* meanings, and shifting representation *from within*), this dissertation proposes that negotiation of cultural meanings and *trans-coding* of 'otherness' can be achieved via the representation of transcultural identities within artistic discourses. Transcultural identity is constituted via multiple cultural attachments, which allows for the manifestation of difference within the same personality, as being simultaneously different from others and also from the self (regarding Mikhail Epstein's theory). Thus, the transcultural model offers a viable conceptual framework for imaginative extension of the self into cultural others.

Thus, the discussion will explore in how far the project *United States of Europe* (U.S.E) employs artistic (re)production of transcultural identities and transcultural repertoires as discursive and creative strategies, which can trigger negotiation of cultural differences. Moreover, the media content, discursive and aesthetic analysis of *United*

States of Europe (U.S.E) will explore interconnections with the rest of the proposed complementary modalities of transcultural aesthetics: sampling of cultural repertoires, *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle of active audience participation and embodied cross-cultural affiliation.

The first sub-section will outline the conceptual dimensions and the organization of the event. Next, representation of transcultural identities will be studied as a creative approach and a discursive strategy for the (re)production of European identities. Thus, several of the artworks participating in *United States of Europe*, which represent and re-imagine processes of transculturation in European context will be closely explored. Moreover, the analysis will suggest that the re-enactment of transculturally encoded motifs could function as a mode of cultural and creative *trans-coding* in terms of sensory cultural affiliation. The final sub-section will reflect on the medial realization (in terms of design and participatory features) of the interactive component of the exhibition and its potential for actively engaging audiences into practices of critical and creative civic participation.

4.1 Summary of the project

United States of Europe (U.S.E) is an interdisciplinary project that involves artistic expressions, sociological research, debates and interaction with the audiences. The title obviously makes a reference to the term that has been widely used by political scientists, historians, fiction writers and futurologists to describe united Europe. The authors of the project quote Napoleon, George Washington, Victor Hugo and Winston Churchill claiming that their concept should not be understood as propaganda for a federal Europe.²⁶⁹ The travelling exhibition within the project (as the interface of its general idea) was on display between November 2011 and April 2013, visiting ten European countries co-organizing the event (Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Portugal, Cyprus, Germany, Bulgaria, France, Ireland and Belgium – mentioned in the chronological order that the exhibits have followed). The project has been coordinated by Goethe Institute e. V in Paris and co-organized by nine other institutions in the participating countries – the University of Lodz, Poland; the Lasipalatsi Film and Media Centre, Finland; The Red House, Bulgaria; the Centre of Culture and Art Initiatives, Lithuania; Pharos Arts Foundation, Cyprus; Transforma, Portugal, AIDA, Belgium;

²⁶⁹ See also the official project's website <http://www.go-use.eu/en/about-u-s-e/presentation.html>.

L'art au Quotidien, France, Cork Vision Centre and the National Sculpture Factory, Ireland. The creation of this partnership was established specifically for the realization of the initiative and it aims at reflecting diversity in terms of geography, old and new EU Member States, historical and political background. The central objective is to explore the notion of identity, citizenship and cultural borders “in order to provoke and wake up people’s minds” ²⁷⁰ as its authors point out. Moreover, “the U.S.E aims to make us listen to others, interact with each other and give the vast European public a voice.”²⁷¹

The project has four complementary dimensions, under the labels: *artistic interpretations, sociological studies, an interactive laboratory* and *a series of debates*. The first category involves curatorial and artistic practices that give interpretations on European identity via photography, video, multimedia and installation art. Three curators with international experiences – Anna Bitkina (Russia), Ryszard W. Kluszczyński (Poland) and Sinziana Ravini (France) – have selected and invited fourteen artists with intercultural backgrounds and proved engagement with the topic of identity in the European (public) space. Almost all of the artists originate from the ten countries co-organizing the project. The invited group of artists includes Luchezar Boyadjiev (Bulgaria), Kennedy Browne artist duo (Ireland), Kyriaki Costa (Cyprus), Jean-Charles Hue (France), Kaarina Kaikkonen (Finland), Anna Konik (Poland), Gerda Lampalzer (Austria), Maria Lusitano (Portugal), Tanja Muravskaja (Estonia), Deimantas Narkevicius (Lithuania), Anu Pennanen (Finland), Apostolis Polymeris (Belgium), REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT collective (Germany) and Arthur Zmijewski (Poland).

The sociological aspect includes video interviews with fifty people from the participating countries. The group of interviewees has been selected by the project’s curators, in order to present a multiplicity of viewpoints and personal stories about Europe. The aim is to illustrate a potential belonging to a shared European entity. Within the interactive laboratory, the artistic and sociological elements combine with each other into the format of a multimedia installation. It has been designed as a creative environment for real-time interaction and exchange of ideas about Europe. The following discussion will reflect on the participatory dimensions and transcultural

²⁷⁰ See also the official project’s website <http://www.go-use.eu/en/about-u-s-e/ideas-behind-the-project.html>

²⁷¹ Ibid.

potential of the interactive laboratory. The analysis will also address five video installations, which re-imagine diverse experiences of being European or living in Europe and employ transcultural aesthetics to a greatest extent among U.S.E. artworks. The corresponding selection of videos includes *Moving Away From Home* (2008) and *It was Just Make Believe* (2011) by the Portuguese-born and London-based video artist Maria Lusitano, *In the Middle of the Way* (work in progress 2001 – 2007) by the Polish artist Anna Konik, who resides in between Dobrodzien, Warsaw and Berlin, *Clean Air* (2004) by the Finish-born artist and filmmaker Anu Pennanen, who lives in Berlin and *Thoughts Are Free* (2011) by the Austrian media artist, lecturer and curator Gerda Lampalzer.

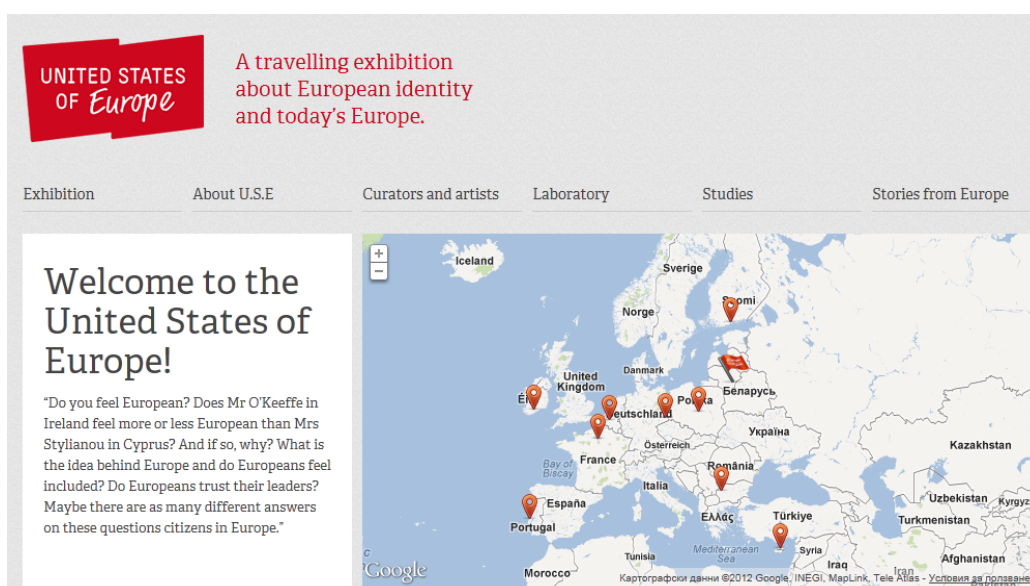


Fig. 20. *The United States of Europe* (2011/13), <http://www.go-use.eu/en/exhibitions/vilnius.html>

4.2 Representation of European identities and processes of transculturation

The following sub-section will consider several of the artworks and creative approaches presented within the U.S.E that most unequivocally claim engagement with the notion of European identity and artistically treat transcultural dynamics in Europe.

Under the title *Scattered Cartographies*, Maria Lusitano assembles her video projection *Moving Away From Home* (2008) and the double-channel video installations *Now It was Just Make Believe* (2011) that deal with motifs of migration, displacement, living in diaspora and changing cultural contexts. Lusitano's work has an auto-ethnographic character since it reflects her own experience of leaving Portugal and

moving to Sweden. The videos intertwine Maria Lusitano and her son's personal stories together with the documentary narratives of other Portuguese immigrants giving an expression to their experiences, dreams and realities. Thus, the perception of home and its possible meanings, questions of belonging and whether Europe can play the role of a home are central for her video pieces as reflections on the constitution of one's identity. As the artist shares, "to contemplate the challenges of migration through art, makes one articulate the differences that exist in a Europe that is struggling to build a European identity."²⁷²

Moving Away From Home (2008) mixes Lusitano's personal narrative about changing home with the story of a Portuguese couple who have become Swedish citizens. The 'storyline' follows their original intentions to spend just a few years in Sweden as economic immigrants and return to Portugal where they would afford to buy a house. In the process, including a short return and attempt to live in their country of origin, their perception of home changes. Thus, they choose to re-turn to Sweden where they have spent overall 40 years. Their diary ends on the emotionally charged day before a travel to Portugal that makes them reflect on loving two countries and living in a state of in-betweenness. Lusitano's story proceeds with her childhood's idea about Sweden as a dream-like country, state of security, and a place that can feel like 'home.' Moving to Sweden in 2007 made her realize that the utopian image she used to have is only still recognizable in Swedish cartoon TV productions, such as Bamse and Karlsson-on-the-Roof, but not within the severe architecture of the neighbourhood that surrounds her. Correspondingly, her aesthetic language visually mixes resemantized fragments from children animations as Bamse with the documentary recordings of her realistic settings. In this sense, Lusitano's video diary relates to Salman Rushdie's concept of *imaginary homelands* that reflects the need of writers in exile, immigrants and expatriates to restore and reclaim the land of origin from which they have been displaced. Thus, they construct an imaginary and fictional version (among many other possible versions) of one's homeland based on fragments of distorted memories.²⁷³ In reverse, Lusitano constructs an imaginary belonging to Sweden as her host country and a potential home, represented by the animation episodes with fairy-tales characters such as Bamse and Karlsson-on-the-Roof. The juxtaposition between recontextualized

²⁷² Maria Lusitano 2013, <http://www.go-use.eu/en/artists/maria-lusitano-santos.html>.

²⁷³ See also Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981- 1991* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 10.

animation fragments and documentary footage, however, deconstructs Lusitano's *imaginary hostland*. The artist's narration and reflections grow into exploring what it means to lose and shift her fictional perception about Sweden into a reality and what implications her dream for living there has for her Portuguese-born son who must learn the new language, adapt, and wait until this new place turns into a 'home.'

Lusitano's work explores notions of home and belonging, which have emerged among the central motifs of transcultural artistic discourses (such as postcolonial literature, World, cinema and Third cinema and diasporic artistic expressions). The tropes of home(land), displacement, exile suggest the ambiguity of identity formation between different spaces and cultures, and also function as narrative structures, which represent processes of transculturation. In this sense, Homi Bhabha has explained displacement as a destabilizing condition, which triggers cross-cultural existence:

It captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world — the unhomeliness — that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation [...] In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.²⁷⁴

With this regard, Lusitano combines panoramas of the urban environment together with more intimate footage of her son playing in domestic settings. Thus, she constructs the state of living in-betweenness also as a dialectic experience between public and private space, as Bhabha implies. The multiple shifts between cultural context that her own narrative and the story of the Portuguese couple represent, also suggest that the psychological state of in-betweenness can be understood as a regular condition of contemporary existence in Europe. Thus, through representing processes of transculturation (experienced by her son, herself and the Portuguese couple), Lusitano evokes re-definition and *trans-coding* of notions of European identity into a transcultural identity.

²⁷⁴ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 9.



Fig. 21. Maria Lusitano *Moving Away From Home* (2008, DVD, 20 min.)
<http://www.marialusitano.org/projects-2008->

Now It was Just Make Believe (2011) conceptually continues the same ‘plot’ of migration and living in a state of in-betweenness. This video diary explores the psychological aspects of living in diaspora from the positions of childhood and adulthood, utopia and constructed reality. The video essay combines several interviews, which draw reflections on the corporeal experience of moving (“because people don’t have roots, they have feet”²⁷⁵), losing some and fabricating new memories, healing the emotional scars of being a foreigner, the painful condition of leaving a place because of not being able to stay (due to visa regimes as shown in an interview with a Brazilian actor based in Sweden) or being a nomad in order to survive (conveyed by the footage of street musicians.) Therefore, this work opens a broader discourse on migration, beyond the subjective redefinition of a country’s stereotypes (such as Swedish welfare system, Karlsson and Stockholm roofs) that the first piece partly involves. It also includes non-European positions (as the one of the Brazilian interviewee), so that it balances the lack of presence of non-EU artists and points of view in the whole project *United States of Europe*.

To a great extent, *Now It was Just Make Believe* discusses migration as a natural social dynamics, which defines global and European societies. In this sense, the video installation reaffirms the distinction that Umberto Eco draws between immigration and migration – “immigration can be controlled politically, but like natural phenomena, migration cannot be (...) What Europe is still trying to tackle as immigration is in fact

²⁷⁵ Maria Lusitano, *Now It was Just Make Believe* (HD video, colour, sound, 26 min., 2011), 10:25’
http://www.marialusitano.org/maria_lusitano/now_it_was_just.html.

migration.”²⁷⁶ Thus, Lusitano’s work opens a discourse on the boundaries that delineate Fortress Europe also from within, such as the North-South divide. Representing a multiplicity of personal experiences through the video interview format, the work allows viewers to extend imaginatively in the experiences of others. Thus, it allows for becoming *strangers to ourselves* (in reference to Julia Kristeva’s concept). The aesthetic possibility to identify with the interviewees’ narratives, which portray universal experiences of migration, also de-Orientalizes the foreigner from being a cultural Other. Thus, in the context of Lusitano’s expression, the representation of transcultural identities and repertoires of transculturation emerges as an actual aesthetic and creative gesture of transcending boundaries between Self and Other.

Simultaneously, Lusitano conveys her message by employing creative methods allowing for audiences’ sensory engagement. The montaged sharing of frames between the two video channels of *Now It was Just Make Believe* conceptually corresponds to the number of shifting perspectives and emotional nuances that this video installation portrays. The edited fragments follow the rhythm of a dynamic puzzle between shifting speakers’ positions and emotional textures. Thus, the previously discussed dimensions on the constitution of the transcultural imaginary through experiential engagement in Maya Nadig’s and Margaret Morse’s studies could be applied here. In this context, Lusitano’s video does not *represent* transculturality (as a narratively portrayed reality), but it *presents* an immediate aesthetic experience of transculturation. In the artwork’s realm the viewers can extend themselves imaginatively into the other in an *intermediate space* between inner subjectivity and outer world that happens as a lived experience of interaction and somatic perception of the montaged frames and episodes. Thus, it can be implied that the video installation invites the spectators into a process of transculturation that is reified through sensory aesthetics experience. Moreover, the poetic video language of the piece plays a role in blurring the boundary between what is conceived as utopia and/or reality, real and imaginary.

Furthermore, within Lusitano’s expression Stuart Hall’s theory of diasporic cultural identity re-appears as a relevant framework for understanding European identities. The art pieces confirm that (European) identity should be considered as an entity beyond its state of ‘being,’ but rather as a process of constant ‘becoming’ and negotiation of cultural difference. Thus, both *Moving Away From Home* and *Now It was*

²⁷⁶ Umberto Eco, “An Uncontrollable Natural Phenomenon” in *Europe: Closed Doors or Open Arms?* EUNIC Yearbook 2014/15 (Goettingen: Steidl, 2015), 212.

Just Make Believe video installations *trans-code* European identity from a nation-state related construction into a processual, relational and transformative entity of multiple belongings across cultural and political boundaries. In this sense, as Gerard Delanty has argued, European identity can be also conceptualised as a cosmopolitan identity: “a cosmopolitan European identity can be seen less as a new supra identity rather than as a growing reflexivity within existing identities, including personal, national and supranational identities, as well as other kinds of identities.”²⁷⁷

In a similar manner, through different personal narratives, Lusitano represents the interconnections between one’s personal, transnational and cultural identity in order to provoke understanding of European identity as a transcultural constitution and an experiential formation. Overall, Lusitano’s artistic work expresses elements of transcultural aesthetics by representing processes of transculturation, as well as by remixing existing media content and by employing the sensory dimensions of the video medium.

Maria Lusitano’s current artistic interests address the links between historical and personal memory, historical utopias and diasporic experiences. Lusitano develops her video projects by using documentary filmmaking and sociological research methods, such as relational ethnography. Her international artistic practice, which includes video, video-installation, drawing, and artist publications has been presented at Manifesta 5, San Sebastian (2004), Photo Espana 6, Madrid (2006) and 29th Biennial of Sao Paulo, (2010). Lusitano has also exhibited in: Moderna Museet, Sweden; Lewis Glucksman Gallery, Ireland; Joshibi University, Japan, Fine Art University of Seoul, Korea; Portuguese National Museum of Contemporary Art and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Gerard Delanty, “The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory,” in *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 57, No. 1(2006), 42.

²⁷⁸ See also KALEIDOSKOPE – Website of Visual Artist Maria Lusitano: <http://www.marialusitano.org/#!bio/pvajv>

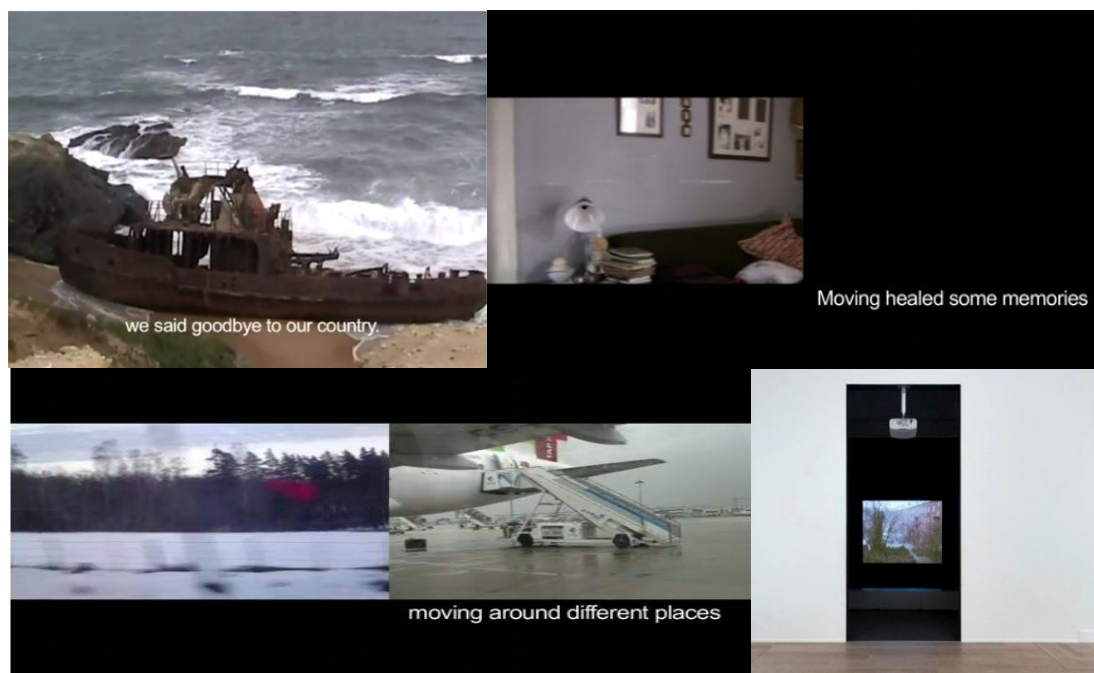


Fig. 22. Maria Lusitano – *Now It Was Just Make Believe* (2011, 26 min.)
<http://www.marialusitano.org/now-it-was-just-make-believe-and->

In parallel with *Scattered Cartographies, In the Middle of the Way* (work in progress 2001 – 2007) by the Polish artist Anna Konik merges the artist's personal story of migration together with the experiences of seven interviewees living in several European cities. Correspondingly, *In the Middle of the Way* is created as a seven-channel video installation in order to present a diversity of personal perspectives and reflections on the meaning of home and states of mobility. The installation gives voice to the experiences of Thaddeus in Warsaw, Hermann in Berlin, Svetlana in Moscow, Gerald in Youghal, Hans-Dieter in Vienna and Jenny and Pele in Zurich, who are homeless, but retell their stories of being marginalized, with a sense of dignity rather than victimization. The artist portrays their everyday life activities, opening the possibility for each one of them to present themselves in multiple ways. Simultaneously, Anna Konik reflects on her own nomadic way of living, between two European countries and three cities – her native Dobrodzien and Warsaw in Poland and Berlin in Germany. Thus, Konik draws a parallel between her interviewees' lives and her own experiences of migration, in order to suggest different states of homelessness and searching for a place to belong. According to her:

The mobility of Tadeusz, Herman, Svetlana, Gerard, Hans-Dieter, Jana & Pele and Anna opens up a dialogue in which geographical boundaries and nationalities are not important. Instead, their individual stories, experiences and dreams build their unique identity and confirm their differentness in a world where nationalities are fluid. Every person I met dreams of a better life, of respect and freedom, they are all trying to find their way in the new reality of the EU.²⁷⁹

Konik's installation explores the role of *the stranger* in European societies, who is eminently constructed as a marginalized Other. With this regard, Jacques Derrida has written on hospitality as a mechanism to keep the ones hosted under control, to exclude particular social groups and ethnicities, to close boundaries and produce nationalism. The two-fold and *undecidable* (blurring stable meanings and oppositions in Derrida's rhetoric) nature of providing hospitality, then, is that it automatically marginalizes the stranger as Other, which can be understood as an inhospitable act.²⁸⁰ Expanding on Derrida's conception of hospitality and undecidability, Zygmunt Bauman claims that the stranger, as a product of modernity, is able to obtain a kind of panoramic knowledge that the native-born lacks:

A non-counterfeit universality may be born only of homelessness [...] It is now the stranger who can find the truth the natives are looking for in vain. Far from being a mark of shame, the incurable foreignness of the stranger is now the sign of distinction. The power of the homeowner is but, a sham. The powerlessness of the homeless is but an illusion.²⁸¹

In a comparable manner, *In the Middle of the Way* studies the homeless person as an *undecidable* subject. The video installation redefines the stable meaning of being homeless as necessarily deprived, and empowers the portrayed subjects by representing their everyday activities, personal narratives and dreams for a better living as universal human efforts. Anna Konik's work shows that European social reality is composed of shared experiences between individuals, thus it transcends the rigid boundaries between native-born selves and uprooted others. By subverting the stigmatized image of the homeless others, Konik's multichannel video installation evokes that inclusive European societies can be the product of shared understanding and processes of interpersonal transculturation.

²⁷⁹ Anna Konik, *In the Middle of the Way* <http://www.go-use.eu/en/artists/anna-konik.html>

²⁸⁰ Jacques Derrida & A. Dufourmantelle. *Of Hospitality*, trans. R. Bowlby, (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2000.

²⁸¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 82.

The central themes of Anna Konik's expression explore the invisible spheres of human existence – perceptions, emotions, intuition. Often her works involve meeting her protagonists by accident, while travelling and thus exploring intimate stories and interpersonal contact. Konik combines video semi-documentary, installation, performance, and sculpture. Her artworks have been exhibited across Poland and Europe and have been acquisitioned by private collections and institutions, such as the Center for Contemporary Art in Ujazdowskisłottet, Warsaw, Leubestiftelsens collection of Gartenau-Salzburg, Podlasiregionens Art Association in Białystok, Upper Silesian Museum in Bytom, Art Association in Lublin and Art Station Foundation in Poznan.²⁸²



Fig. 23. Anna Konik, *In the Middle of the Way* (video, 2001 – 2007)
<http://www.go-use.eu/en/artists/anna-konik.html>

The motif of migration and being a foreigner takes a similar treatment in the video artwork *Clean Air* (2004) by the Finish artist Anu Pennanen. The video installation juxtaposes aerial views of Helsinki with a soundtrack composed of the recorded breathings sounds of thirty immigrants living in the city, which engages the audience at sensory level. The piece draws upon a public advertisement claiming Helsinki as the capital with the cleanest air in Europe in 2002. The artist suggests that this statement can stand for and be interpreted as a “manifestation of the non-mixed, almost exclusively white, ethnic “purity” of the Finnish territory.”²⁸³ From a broader perspective, Pennanen's comment can be expanded into a critical reflection on Europeanness and European identity as being predominantly constructed as ‘pure’ and

²⁸² See also CULTURE.PL Anna Konik <http://culture.pl/en/artist/anna-konik>

²⁸³ Anu Pennanen, *Clean Air* <http://www.go-use.eu/en/artists/anu-pennanen.html>

‘white’ entities. With this regard, in *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (2015) Isolina Ballesteros makes the accurate observation that liberal intellectual articulation of multicultural and hybrid reality, along with popular forms of exoticisation of Otherness, “coexist with the still prevalent, official synonymy of the terms “European” and “white” and the fallacy of national purity, both of which contribute to the radicalization of official xenophobic discourses.”²⁸⁴ Moreover, Ballesteros considers that what prevails then “is a fundamental contradiction between Europe’s distinctive diversity and identity, which consists of multiple belongings, and the homogenizing official narratives that insist upon denying the reality of an inherently mixed system.”²⁸⁵

Clean Air embodies the very same dichotomy between official discourses (Helsinki’s public slogan of being the capital with cleanest air), which reproduce *discursive racism* (to borrow Teun van Dijk’s notion)²⁸⁶ and the actual mixed reality of multiethnic coexistence. Thus, Pennanen’s artistic intention is to re-enact the experience of being an outsider and to make the presence of thirty immigrants “tangible, visible and audible through the sound of their breath.”²⁸⁷ The installation also involves audio recording of each one of the participants saying her/his name. The intimate acts of breathing and self-identification by speaking out one’s name fuses with the disappearing and reappearing of Helsinki’s landscape under the clouds. As Pennanen comments further “nobody wants to be nameless; nobody should dissolve into something nameless. *Clean Air* represents the repressed presence of outsiders coming back to haunts us.”²⁸⁸

In this sense, Pennanen’s use of video as a reflexive medium situates the construction of European identity between processes of inclusion and exclusion that reminisces of Gerard Delanty’s thesis in *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (1995). Delanty has studied European identity as constructed through the imposition of otherness in the formation of binary opposition between ‘Us’ and ‘Them.’ Then, identification takes place not through a sense of belonging and solidarity, but as an opposition and negation of the other: “the purity and the stability of the ‘We’ is

²⁸⁴ Isolina Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2015), 8.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Dijk, Teun A. van, *Elite discourse and racism*, (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993)

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

guaranteed first in the naming, then in the demonization and, finally, in the cleansing of otherness.”²⁸⁹

Pennanen’s work transcends the boundary between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, Self and Other by employing aerial birdview footage, which suggest equality and inclusiveness under the same vast sky. At the same time, the ungraspable reality under the panning camera – the disappearing and reappearing urbanscape under the clouds – also functions as a symbolic blurring of the boundaries, which segregate the social space below. The video plays subtly with visible and invisible, spoken and unspoken and in this sense it evokes ambiguous perceptions of reality, which also correspond to the unstable and influx character of transculturation. Pennanen’s non-narrative creative approach does not directly involve the representation of transcultural identities, but acknowledges their presence by sonifying their absence (through the soundtrack of immigrants’ inhaling and exhaling Helsinki’s clean air). Thus, the work employs a transcultural aesthetic language, which triggers viewers’ transcultural sensitivity via the sensory dimensions of the medium.

Overall, Anu Pennanen’s video works and filmmaking can be defined as lyrical and often sensorial, dealing with people who are marginalized politically, socially and economically. The aim of Pennanen is to use fictional elements in order to re-negotiate reality and transform their experiences in a subtle way. Thematically Pennanen explores processes of globalization and social alienation, the interconnections between architecture, temporality of sites, urban public spaces, human lives and personal perceptions. Her films have been screened at Rotterdam and Hamburg Film Festivals, Kassel Documentary Festival, MOMA New York, CCA Glasgow, CAC Vilnius, Centre Pompidou Paris, Montehermoso Cultural Center, Spain, Frankfurter Kunstverein, and Manifesta 5 San Sebastián, Spain.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 5.

²⁹⁰ See also Anu Pennanen artist’s webpage: <http://www.anupennanen.com/cv/>



Fig. 24. Anu Pennanen, *Clean Air* (S16 mm colour film transferred to DVD, 8min, 2004)
<http://www.go-use.eu/en/artists>

From another perspective, Gerda Lampalzer's contribution to the U.S.E stresses even further the dynamics of exclusion and othering, approaching them as 'internal' symptoms of the EU. *Thoughts Are Free* (2011) is a single channel video installation that comments on the relations between EU states by employing language. It shows four European citizens speaking Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Slovenian representing the so called "former Eastern European neighbours"²⁹¹ of Austria. Their talks are cut and reconstructed into the German phrase "Die Gedanken sind frei" (thoughts are free) that reverberates with the text of a folk song known as a statement associated to liberation movements. By recontextualizing and sampling (through cutting and mixing the speeches) Lampalzer *trans-codes* meanings (by subverting stable notions and generating new ones), and makes an ironic comment on the re/unification of Europe as a form of liberation. Her work accentuates the fact that two decades after the fall of the Iron Curtain Austrians hardly speak or understand the languages of the neighbouring countries. The video includes reflections on how the different EU members observe each other, what sort of governmental relations are created and how these define one's belonging to any community and shapes the constitution of a collective identity.

With this regard, Lampalzer's video opens discourse on the constitution of diverse and inclusive European societies, especially in terms of multilingual diversity. It resembles Kevin Robins' proposal to redefine European cultural diversity into a transcultural diversity, which is inherently related to the emergence of a shared

²⁹¹ Gerda Lampalzer, <http://www.go-use.eu/en/artists/gerda-lampalzer.html>

European social and cultural space beyond the nation-state framework. Thus, transcultural diversity clearly opposes the national paradigm according to which individuals should live only in one culture at a time, speak one language, and adhere to one polity – a worldview which contradicts the basic principles and complexities of people's cultures and identities.²⁹² Europe is experiencing social, cultural and linguistic transformations, which evokes promotion, recognition and participation of regional minority and immigrant languages in the public sphere. A transcultural European imaginary, could be argued then, is also a matter of a multilingual *semiosphere* (a synchronic semiotic space of cultural exchange, according to Yuri Lotman) and a cross-lingual imaginary. In this sense, creative representations and reconstructions of multilingualism in Europe, such as Gerda Lampalzer's video *Thoughts Are Free*, correspond to the representation of transcultural identities, reflect European transnational hybridity and a transcultural European imaginary.

Similarly to *Thoughts Are Free*, Gerda Lampalzer's photographic and moving-image works are often defined by manipulation and transformation of raw film material. Thematically she deals with people's biographies explored within economic and political contexts. Since 1980 Lampalzer works as the executive of the Medienwerkstatt Wien. Apart from being a practicing media artist, she works as a curator and a lecturer in Applied Arts in Vienna.²⁹³

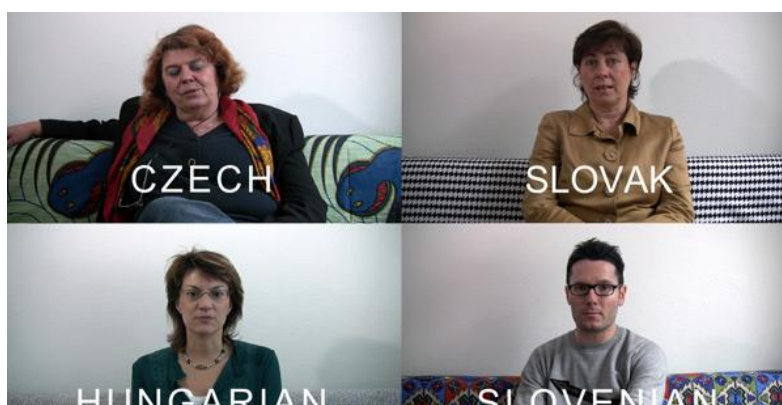


Fig. 25. Gerda Lampalzer, *Thoughts Are Free* (video, 2011), <http://www.go-use.eu/en/artists>

²⁹² Kevin Robins, "The Challenge of Transcultural Diversities" in *Boundaries: Transience and intercultural dynamics*, (Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals, 82-83, 2006), 245-252, 250.

²⁹³ See also U.S.E Curators&Artists, Gerda Lampalzer, <http://www.go-use.eu/en/artists/gerda-lampalzer.html>

4.3 Media participation as a transculturalizing strategy for re-imagining Europe as a space of critical cosmopolitanism

The interactive component of the U.S.E brings together the artistic expressions and the sociological research (in interview format) and plays with the possibility for active audience involvement. The *interactive laboratory*, as it has been defined by the project's curator, allows viewers to submit their personal stories about Europe on-site in the exhibition spaces and online. These contributions can have the medium incarnations of written texts, photos, images and video sequences. The author of the laboratory, the Latvian media artists and researcher Janis Garancs, suggests that the interactive space of the lab corresponds to interpretations of the project's title not only from a political perspective (state as a country), but also from an abstract stance that reads state as a status/condition. Thus, his engagement with the U.S.E is rather devoted to studying the condition of being European today. Thus, the *interactive laboratory* emerges as relevant multimedia work, which presents how European citizens and individuals living in Europe can participate in the construction of a shared European social imaginary. According to Garancs, the laboratory acts as "a temporary virtual embassy of the United States of Europe, connecting the U.S.E exhibition venues with satellite events and locations."²⁹⁴ It is composed of touch screens (for completing an interactive quiz on Europe), projections and computer terminals for audiences' textual inputs and online feedback on the project:

Thus, the laboratory works as a 'processing device' – that travels from place to place and adapts accordingly – that will collate the co-creators' and visitors' input and manifest itself as a self-organizing map of overview, offering multiple layers of exploration and becoming – through immersive 3D visualizations and sonifications (featuring also computer generated stereoscopic projection and multi-channel video) – an evolving multimedia artwork itself.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ See also <http://www.go-use.eu/en/laboratory/index.html>.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

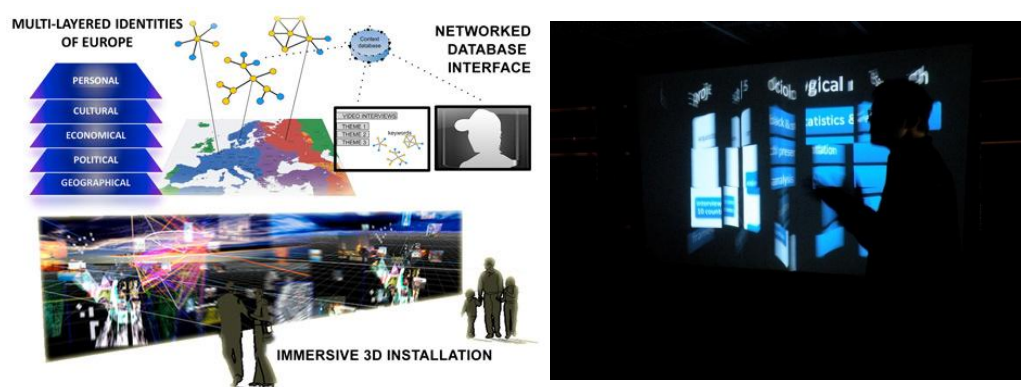


Fig. 26. Janis Garancs, *3D visualization of the interactive laboratory* (mixed media, 2011)
<http://www.go-use.eu/en/laboratory/index.html>.

The immersive dimensions of this multimedia installation expand the visual representation of European identity into an aesthetic experience of embodying the state of being European. The possibility for re-enacting different versions of what it means to be European obviously corresponds to the medial and cultural shift from representational to performative and participatory artistic practices, discussed in the previous chapter. By inviting viewers to shift from spectators into participants, the U.S.E is a clear attempt for an artistic process that involves the audiences in the co-creation of new meanings. Still, the potential for co-creative expression granted to the audiences within the framework of the interactive lab, could be questioned. The interface design invites visitors to participate, but the media specificities offered for viewers' expression can be further democratised and liberated from their fixed and pre-given generic dimensions (such as answering structured question forms instead of allowing for more open-ended users' contributions.) What seems to be missing is the opportunity for an active *encoding-decoding-encoding* loop of reception, resemantization and recontextualization that audiences can employ as a co-creative and critical practice. A step further in this direction would have been the possibility for participants to create user-generated content and 'play' with the medium. Reviewing Jenkins' thesis, exactly such media modalities of participatory culture, can teach deliberation and critical involvement. At the same time, Nico Carpentier's critique on media convergence and his theory on audience participatory activities draw the distinction between structural media participation (at a macro level) and content-related participation (as a micro practice). Therefore, 'playing' with the medium and generating critical and creative content can be understood as an 'active' and critical participation,

which potentially can trigger critical and creative *trans-coding* of meanings across media platforms. Thus, audiences' 'active' participation with (interactive) creative mediums could enhance critical engagement and facilitation of transcultural processes. In this context, the realization of the U.S.E as a platform inspired to challenge European democratic deficit (as suggested by the initiator, concept creator and project manager Johanna Suo²⁹⁶) could have involved a sounder possibility for critical reflexivity and co-creative subversion of power/knowledge structures by the audiences.

Nevertheless, the U.S.E initiative for establishing a kind of European public sphere (or mimicking the ideal for such) has the potential to generate and educate practices of civic participation. As the first chapter has studied, Nick Stevenson claims that citizens can learn cultural citizenship through critical engagement in everyday life (and media), which the U.S.E conceptually envisions. In this relation Gerard Delanty recognition of the "*learning dimension of citizenship as a constructivist process*," where the process of individual learning is translated into collective learning and ultimately becomes realized into social institutions, can be achieved through the constitution of *cosmopolitan imagination*.²⁹⁷ The cosmopolitan imagination, according to Delanty, is not synonymous to the mere condition of pluralism, but concerns openness, transformation and translation of difference between local and global, core and periphery, particular and universal, past and present, self and other. Thus, the cosmopolitan imagination and the transcultural imaginary share similar socio-cultural dynamics. The U.S.E project itself can be understood as the construction of a social world, in which the self and the other are enunciated in self-problematizing modes within discursive processes, that according to Delanty, defines the reflexive and relational character of critical cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolitan imaginary. In this sense, the participatory dimensions of the project *United States of Europe*, by largely counting on and encouraging citizens' active involvement, optimistically re-imagines Europe as a space of critical cosmopolitanism.

²⁹⁶ See also *Ideas behind the project* section at <http://www.go-use.eu/en/about-u-s-e/ideas-behind-the-project.html>.

²⁹⁷ Gerard Delanty, "Two Conceptions of Cultural Citizenship: A Review of Recent Literature on Culture and Citizenship," in *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (London School of Economics and Political Science, March 2002), 64-5.

4.4 Conclusions: creatively reified ‘Another Europe’

The analysis of the project *United States of Europe* (U.S.E) addressed a range of artistic interpretations of European social realities and modes of re-imagining European identities as transcultural identities. Thus, the discussed artworks presented examples of transcultural aesthetics and its modalities of representing transculturation, sampling cross-cultural repertoires and generating transcultural sensitivity at a sensory level, which the analysed five video installations emphasized to a certain extent. At the same time, the examination of the interactive laboratory showcased the potential of participatory media to engage European audiences in the constitution of a transcultural European imaginary via processes of *encoding-decoding-encoding* novel content.

The video installations *Moving Away From Home* and *Now It was Just Make Believe* by Maria Lusitano explore the psychological aspects of displacement, living in diaspora and altering perceptions of home and belonging from the perspective of imaginary and lived realities. The tropes of home and belonging, as typical transcultural repertoires, are used to (re)present and re-enact states of cultural in-betweenness and processes of transculturation. In accordance with Hall’s theory of diasporic cultural identity, Lusitano’s videos exemplify that European identity is an entity in the process of constant ‘becoming.’ Moreover, her works re-imagine European identity as a cross-cultural entity separated from the nation-state frame of reference. Thus, through the representation of transcultural identities, Maria Lusitano *trans-codes* European identity into a transcultural formation, which embodies the negotiation of difference between self and cultural others.

In a similar direction, Anna Konik draws a parallel between her own nomadic life and the existential experiences of several homeless people from different cities across Europe. By representing their personal narratives and everyday lives, the artist gives voice to their human dignity and allows viewers to identify imaginatively with interviewees’ universal human desires. In such manner, the multichannel video installation *In the Middle of the Way* uses elements of transcultural aesthetics by transcending the boundary between self and marginalized others and by constructing an inclusive version of European social reality.

Anu Pennanen’s work *Clean Air* conveys a similar message by employing the sensorial dimensions of the video medium. Her non-narrative piece acknowledges the invisible presence of thirty immigrants in Helsinki by making audible their intimate acts

of breathing. Penannen recontextualizes the slogan of a public advertisement on Helsinki's clean air and *trans-codes* its meaning into a critical and creative reflection on Helsinki's pure and white ethnic composition. Thus, she deconstructs popular practices of discursive racism, which are predominant in a broader European context. Pennanen's transcultural aesthetic language involves both resemantization of existing content, as well as the generation of cultural and empathic affiliations at a sensory level.

Gerda Lampalzer's video *Thoughts Are Free* also portrays dynamics of exclusion and negation of the other as characteristics of European identity construction (in reference to Gerard Delanty's thesis). The work evokes Europe's transcultural diversity by assembling a cross-lingual collage of outspoken expressions. The artist's critical engagement functions as a discursive practice of critical articulation of the existence of various (linguistic) borders in Europe, thus it signals the need for transcendence of cultural boundaries and deferral of differences between self and others within European societies. Lampalzer employs the aesthetic modality of sampling existing content in order to generate new meanings and provoke the prospect for socio-cultural transformation and transculturation.

As it was further observed, the interactive component of the project invites for audience engagement. A critical scope on the interactive dimensions of the project revealed a potential necessity for more active audience participation at a micro-level and co-creative audience involvement. A step further in this direction would have been the inclusion of medial possibilities for critical and creative engagement on the side of the public, such as the production of user-generated (artistic) content. According to Jenkins, such practices of 'playing' with the medium could potentially foster reflexivity, civic responsibility and deliberation. Still, by encouraging citizens' involvement, the project *United States of Europe* re-imagines Europe as a communicative space of cultural citizenship and critical cosmopolitanism. The participatory dimensions of *United States of Europe* imply that citizens can play an active role in *encoding-decoding-encoding* alternative narratives and discourses about Europe. Thus, active audience participation can be further creatively developed as a vital element in the constitution of a transcultural European imaginary.

As recurring transcultural repertoires emerge the tropes of home and belonging, migration and travel, living in diaspora, intermediate *third* spaces of transculturation and identities in-between. Artist use as a critical discursive strategy the representation of us/them divisions in order to deconstruct processes of othering and trigger

transcendence of boundaries between self and cultural Others. Cross-cultural affiliations are also induced at somatic level via sound and multiscreen moving image compositions, which present an immediate aesthetic experience of identification with someone else. The interactive component of the exhibition suggests the potential for active audience involvement in producing new connotations and alternative discourses. Thus, U.S.E. dimensions of creative expression employ the suggested *trans-coding* modalities (representation of transcultural identities, sampling of repertoires, *encoding-decoding-encoding* of new meanings and sensorial cultural engagement) in a complimentary order.

Overall, it can be concluded that by following similar aesthetics and conceptual concerns, the discussed creative expressions constitute a shared semantic space. The works re-imagine European identities as transcultural entities and Europe as a *real-and-imagined* third space, which envisages the transcendence of geo-political and socio-cultural border lines. In relation to Chris Rojek's argument, that the arts are the most profound expression of the imaginary, which dissolves divisions and frictions of religion, race, ethnicity and politics, it can be concluded that the discussed artistic expressions constitute a shared European imaginary. Rojek connects the social imaginary with the notion of 'another' culture – borrowed from Salman Rushdie's "another Britain" (the Britain of Blake, Shelley, Orwell, C.L.R. James, Ken Loach, the Beatles, the Clash, etc.²⁹⁸), which opposes cultural, ethnic, racial and class divisions. In this sense, by symbolically transcending the boundaries which delineate Europe from outside and within, *United States of Europe* creatively reifies the emergence of 'another Europe.'

²⁹⁸ Chris Rojek, *Cultural Studies* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2007), 158-9.

5. Case study: *Remapping Europe* – *Remix Project* (2013)

This part of the dissertation will explore the *trans-coding* potential of intertextual and intermedial remixing and recontextualization of repertoires across cultural borders, by taking into consideration the *Remapping Europe, a Remix Project* (2013) initiated by the Doc Next Network and coordinated by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. *Remapping Europe* employs the *trans-coding* modality of sampling media content and cross-cultural references in order to conquer and deconstruct negative mass media representations of migration in Europe, which reproduce migrants as “stereotyped, criminalized, racially categorized, objectified and subjected to hate speech, all of which serve to deny their individual voices and agency,” as the initiator of the project Vivian Paulissen points out.²⁹⁹ Thus, through remixing existing media content the *Remapping Europe* media makers construct alternative representations, which challenge prevailing mass media discourses on migration. As a creative platform *Remapping Europe, a Remix Project* achieves this by encouraging the re-contextualization of film and media archives. The range of participants encompasses professionally trained media artists as well as untaught media-makers who experiment with creativity in the process of taking part in the project.

The first sub-section will present a summary of the project, its concept and related initiatives. Then, the modality of sampling of cultural repertoires and mixing media contents will be explored in the *Remapping Europe* video pieces created by young media-makers in Spain, Poland, Turkey and the UK. The creative ateliers in the corresponding countries will be studied via several video remixes representing the central thematic engagement and media approach undertaken by the media creators in each specific context. The selected works coincide with the official *Remapping Europe* DVD collection, which has been circulated by the Doc Next Network and ECF. The final part of this section will focus on the work of the artist collective *European Souvenirs*, who employ transcultural aesthetics and sampling as a mode of critical and creative *trans-coding* in the design of live-cinema performances.

²⁹⁹ Vivian Paulissen, “Remixing Europe: Migrants, Media, Representation, Imagery” in *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 5.

5.1 Summary of the project

Remapping Europe, a Remix Project (2013) by Doc Next Network is “an investigative artistic project that aims to contribute to an inclusive cultural practice and public imagery in and of Europe by connecting young creative media-makers who have (im)migrant perspectives from Spain, Poland, Turkey, and the UK to wider European intergenerational audiences.”³⁰⁰ Five media labs in the corresponding countries have engaged 50 young media-makers with cross-cultural backgrounds into creating new content from (news) media and personal archives. The concept of the project is to contest prevailing media representations and imagery of migrant in European societies by re-mixing media (archives) as a method of re-viewing, re-investigating and re-considering dominant representations. In this sense, the project employs ‘remix’ as “a cultural phenomenon in which existing audio-visual material and images are framed into a new content – introducing new meanings that reveal our way of understanding the past related to the present, and casting the future.”³⁰¹ Thus, *Remapping Europe*’s objective is to acknowledge the value of self-representation by young migrants in order to challenge mainstream public discourses largely shaped by public and commercial TV, radio and newspapers. Such ‘traditional’ media often emit generalized and prejudiced debate on migration in contemporary Europe, structured along ethnic, religious and geo-political categorizations.³⁰² For instance, mass media (re)produce popular fear-inducing stereotypes of Muslim migrants as Islamic fundamentalists, Eastern-Europeans as primitive low-skilled workers, asylum seekers as illegal traffickers and criminals. With this regard, it can be also noticed that already since 2013 *Remapping Europe* has been problematizing currently urgent and topical concerns on migration in Europe in the context of the ongoing refugee crisis.

Remapping Europe was initiated by the Doc Next network in April 2012 in collaboration with the cultural hubs: the Association of the Creative Initiative ‘e’(Poland), ZEMOS98 (Spain), MODE Istanbul (Turkey), the British Film Institute (BFI)’s Future Film Programme (UK) and the European Cultural Foundation (the Netherlands). The media makers in the corresponding media labs and ateliers could also obtain inspiration while collaborating with local associations working with migrant

³⁰⁰ See also <http://www.docnextnetwork.org/remappingeurope/>

³⁰¹ Vivian Paulissen, *Remapping Europe. Films and Performances* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 6.

³⁰² Ibid.

communities – Office of Social Rights ODS (Seville), Homo Faber (Lublin), Istanbul Bigli University Migration Research Centre and Tarlabasi Community Centre (Istanbul) and Refugee Youth (London).

The various activities of the overall initiative *Remapping Europe* extend into: five creative media ateliers in the participating four countries; screenings of 48 remix short movies at international film festivals and presentation within an online catalogue – Doc Next Network Media Collection; a DVD with selected remix movies representing participants' creative work from the five media labs (which will be further studied in the following sub-section); live-cinema performances by the artists' collective *European Souvenirs*; a seminar taking place within ZEMOS98 Festival in April 2014 which brought together artists, filmmakers, activists and thinkers, whose perspectives have been included into an investigative publication entitled *Remixing Europe. Migrants, Media Representation, Imagery*. The following discussion will pay a closer attention to a selection of short films created at the five media labs of the project, which most obviously bring into play transcultural aesthetics. Afterwards, the live-cinema performance by the artists' collective *European Souvenirs* and their remix aesthetics of sampling of cultural of repertoires will be taken into consideration.

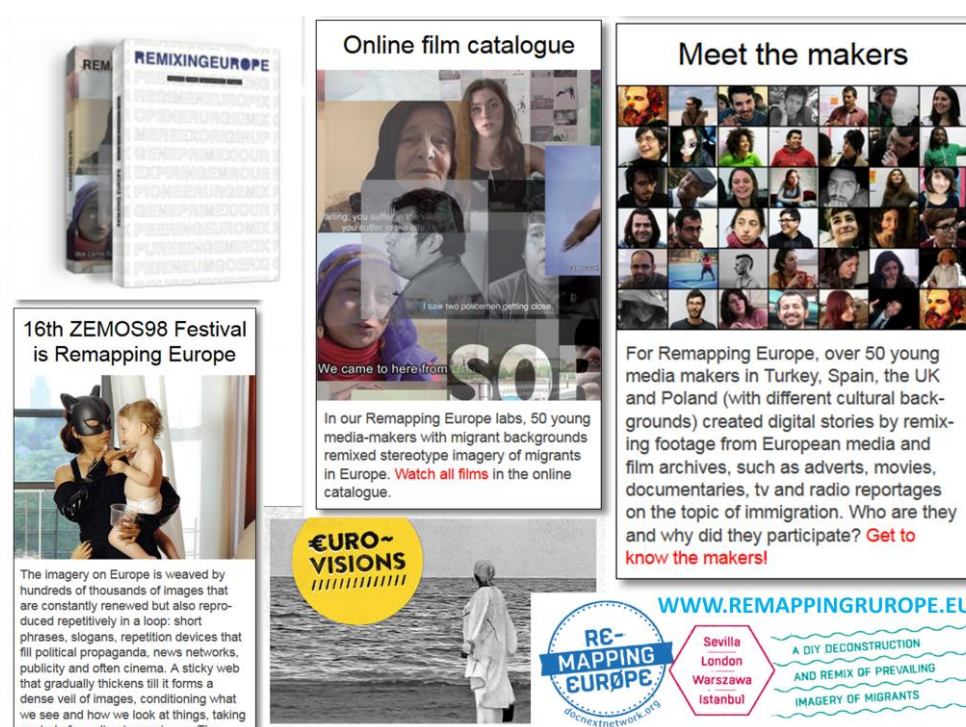


Fig. 27. *Remapping Europe – Remix project*, images: <http://www.docnextnetwork.org/remappingeurope/>

5.2 Sampling of cultural repertoires and remixing of existing media content

The creative *Remapping Europe* ateliers in Spain, Poland, Turkey and the UK will be presented through the analysis of the video remixes included in the official *Remapping Europe* DVD collection. Thus, the central thematic concerns and media approach of each media lab will be illustrated by several video works. The historical background and mass media discourse on migration in each of the corresponding countries will be also presented briefly in order to contextualise the analysis of the discussed video remixes.

5.2.1 Remapping Europe atelier – Spain

5.2.1.1. Spain – history of migration

Spain represents a unique case of migration history, defined by a shift from being an emigration country into a country of immigration (starting shortly after signing the Treaty of Adherence to join the European Community in 1985). Throughout most of the twentieth century Spain was a sender country with huge outflows to Latin American countries – approximately 3.5 million Spanish nationals left between 1850 and 1950. European countries (mostly France, Germany and Switzerland) also became a destination for economic emigration in the early 1960's and the 1970's. After joining the European Community in 1986, during the 1990's Spain changed its emigration profile into a country of immigration. Inflows expanded gradually, from under 30 thousand per year in 1996 to 958 thousand new arrivals in 2007, composed of mostly Europeans, Latin American nationals (mostly from Peru and Bolivia) and African populations (mostly from Morocco).³⁰³ The period between 1980's and early 1990's was also defined by inflows of return migration (emigrant Spanish citizens born in Spain), while in the 1990's most of the Spanish national inflows came from abroad-born individuals (since Spanish nationality is acquired through parental nationality regardless of the country of birth). Between 2002 and 2014 an accumulated immigration inflow of 7.3 million and a net flow of 4.1 million – the vast majority of migrants arrived from Europe (3.4 million), Latin America (2.5 million) and Africa (1.3 million, mostly from Morocco). Thus, Spain became the second largest recipient of immigration in absolute terms among OECD countries, following the United States.³⁰⁴ Eurostat estimates that in

³⁰³ Mario Izquierdo, Juan F. Jimeno and Aitor Lacuesta, *Spain: From Immigration to Emigration?* Banco de España, 2015.

³⁰⁴ Jaume Martí Romero, *The Remarkable Case of Spanish Immigration*, 8 Dec. 2015 <http://bruegel.org/2015/12/the-remarkable-case-of-spanish-immigration/> (accessed 10 July 2016)

2010 14% of Spain's total population was composed of foreign-born residents, accounting for 6.4 million people.³⁰⁵ According to The Spanish National Institute of Statistics, over one million and a half of the foreign residents in 2010 came from Latin America (especially from Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil), three quarters of a million were from Morocco, two million came from EU member states (mostly from Romania, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Bulgaria), while the rest were smaller communities of Chinese-born residents, South East Asian groups (especially from Spain's former colony the *Philippines*) and from several sub-Saharan African countries.³⁰⁶ In line with immigration policy, individuals from countries belonging to the former Spanish Empire (mainly in Latin America, the Philippines and from Equatorial Guinea and Western Sahara) can obtain Spanish nationality after continuous legal residence of two years in Spain. Naturalized citizens, then, are no longer counted as immigrants. Spanish nationality is automatically granted to the children of immigrants born in Spain whose parents' nationality of origin is not transferred *jus sanguinis* upon their child's birth abroad, thus statelessness is avoided.³⁰⁷

The financial crisis in 2008 caused a shift in migration trends expressed in decrease of immigrant flows from Europe and Latin America, and increase of inflows (as a share of the total) from Africa and Asia. The decline of GDP growth in 2007 triggered migration outflows from Spain resulting in more than 400 thousand per year (slightly less than 10 per thousand of the total domestic population) since 2010. This tendency can be explained with the high mobility of foreign nationals residing in Spain – in 2012 approximately 50 per thousand of foreigners left the country, while less than 1 per thousand of Spanish-born nationals emigrated. Thus, a recent report suggests a novel transition from a massive immigration regime into a vast emigration after the Great Recession (2008-2012)³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Eurostat (Katya Vasileva) 6.5% of the EU population are foreigners and 9.4% are born abroad, 34/2011

³⁰⁶ National Institute of Statistics Press Report, (INE, June 3), 2009. <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np551.pdf>

³⁰⁷ See also Realisation Netzwerk Migration in Europa e. V. *Migration Policy in Spain* (online) <http://www.migrationeducation.org/48.0.html#> and "Country Profile: Spain" in Focus Migration (Hamburg: Hamburg Institute of International Economics HWWI, 2008) http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/typo3_upload/groups/3/focus_Migration_Publikationen/Laenderprofile/CP_06_Spain-08.pdf

³⁰⁸ See also Ángeles Arjona Garrido and Juan Carlos Checa Olmos, *Spain, Country of Immigration* (Netzwerk Migration in Europa e. V., 2009) <http://www.migrationeducation.org/48.1.html?&rid=145&cHash=6add42cf740da26d40f16982462d1738>; Mario Izquierdo, Juan F. Jimeno and Aitor Lacuesta, *Spain: From Immigration to Emigration?* (Banco de España, 2015)

5.2.1.2. Spain – mainstream media discourse on migration

The outlined migration history logically explains the diverse and multiethnic composition of Spanish society. While Spain's immigration policies are considered as generally open and committed to integration,³⁰⁹ elite discourses (by politicians, journalists, writers, academics and other 'symbolic' elites) are reproducing social practices of discrimination, as Teun van Dijk argues. His study on discourse and racism in Spain recognizes the long tradition of discursive discrimination originating from the Reconquista against the 'Moors,' the expulsion of the Jews, the colonization of the Americas and the exploitation of indigenous populations and African slaves, as well as the long-standing stigmatization of 'Gypsies' (Gitanos and Gitanas). All of which nowadays translate into prejudices against new immigrants arriving from Africa and Latin America. Thus, within Spanish public discourse (as well as everywhere else across Europe) the positive aspects of immigration (cultural, economic and demographic contribution to the host society) are replaced with negative stereotypes from a dominant western-white perspective, which associate immigrants with crime, illegality, lack of adaptation and other problems.³¹⁰

In this context, and within the *Remixing Europe* seminar organized in April 2014, Carlos Delclós comments that in Spanish media landscape news usually depict immigrants at the borders of Europe, rather than as active members of Spanish community. Media representation of immigrants and black men in particular, as he points out, usually focus on the "problem" or "opportunity" of immigration, while migrants are often portrayed next to state symbols and (military) forces:

[I]t was not until the PAH (the Platform of Mortgage Victims) took the stage that one encountered men and women with names like Samba and Fatima in the news talking about the same issues as locals (in this case, housing). Instead, media accounts emphasize the role of shadowy "mafias" who trick migrants into paying thousands of euros to risk their lives, as grainy helicopter footage of indistinguishable "sub-Saharan" "marching" in an "organised single file-line" towards the border cuts to images of shivering black or Maghrebi Africans wrapped in blankets bearing the Red Cross logo. The Civil Guard's shield is often superimposed on the corner of the screen.³¹¹

³⁰⁹ Joaquín Arango *Exceptional in Europe? Spain's Experience with Immigration and Integration* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013).

³¹⁰ Teun A. van Dijk., *Discourse and Racism in Spain*, Lecture APAC-ELT, Barcelona 27 de febrero de 2004. Apac 53, 2005, 19-25. (online)

<http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/Discourse%20and%20racism%20in%20Spain.pdf>

³¹¹ Carlos Delclós, "The Profile, the Reality and the Barrier: The incident was not reported in the media", in *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 26-29, 28.

Delclós ironically reconstruct Spanish mediascape by employing popular discursive labels, which reproduce negative stereotypes of immigrants in Spain. Moreover, he recognizes that for overcoming the barriers between people, independent media makers should stand for human rights by being “critical, autonomous and disruptive towards official narratives and the mainstream media for as long as they exclude the voices of the dispossessed.” The contrapuntal interrelation between mass media and independent (creative) media representations, which Delclós foresees, summarizes the overall conceptual dimensions of *Remapping Europe, a Remix Project* as an initiative which aims to challenge mainstream media discourses on migration. The following section will deepen into the exact creative praxis of subverting and *trans-coding* negative representations of migrants in Spain. It will focus on *Remapping Europe* media remixes, produced in the creative atelier in Seville, which construct alternative to mass media narratives and transcend the boundaries between self and cultural others.

5.2.1.3. Spain – *Remapping Europe* media remixes

Remapping Europe’s media remixes produced in Seville, Spain were released with the technical, artistic and aesthetic support of the creative collective ZEMOS98. For the realization of the project, the Spanish atelier also collaborated with the Office of Social Rights (ODS). The participants followed a two-stage programme involving workshops at the local atelier (two three-hour sessions per week in the course of three months) and an International Encounter. The latter served as an opportunity for the participants to take part into different group activities, such as a session on social and human rights organized by ODS – under the title WeTube was launched an audiovisual communication and social rights workshop. Moreover, a showcase of the created remixed video was presented within the ZEMOS98 Festival in April 2014.

The conceptual dimensions of the atelier dealt with establishing a common narrative universe around the idea of disappearing “social superheroes”, as the workshop supervisors define social activists, through working with transmedia, self-fiction methodologies, collective storytelling and remix tools.³¹² The produced short movies are directly influenced by ZEMOS98’s remix aesthetics of sampling fragments of pre-existing media content as the main source for the creation of novel artworks.

³¹² Felipe G. Gil, *Remapping Europe. Films and Performances* (European Cultural Foundation, 2013), 41.

Moreover, according to ZEMOS98, remix defines the logics of our cultural system, knowledge, education, communication and politics. The collective explores ideas of open source sharing and free culture, the convergence between professional and amateur creativity, DIY (Do-It-Yourself) media, digital networks and contemporary thought.³¹³ With this regard, it should be noted that *Remapping Europe – Remix Project*'s conceptual framework and artistic drive have been borrowed from ZEMOS98's overall creative approach towards remix. Furthermore, ZEMOS98's scope of diverse activities involves not only investigation and mixing of new narrative formats (such as internet, digital video, net.radio, weblogs), but also organization of cultural research, extended education initiatives and training projects such as seminars, discussions, publications, workshops, conferences, exhibitions, courses and other cultural events, among which is the annual ZEMOS98 International Festival. Since June 2015 ZEMOS98 are also official members of the transnational civil society organization European Alternatives and have participated in its Transeuropa Festival 2015 edition "Beyond Fragments." Thus, ZEMOS98 share European Alternative's citizens' activism model based on simultaneously transnational and highly local, bottom-up and participatory, creative and experimental innovative activities (campaigns, festivals, exhibitions), which involve global participants from China, the Americas and North Africa in order to conquer a Eurocentric approach.³¹⁴

The majority of videos produced at the media lab in Seville deal with common perceptions of otherness, social experiences in new cultural contexts after leaving home and the construction of identity as an entity in-between. The subversive character of parody (as suggested by Linda Hutcheon and discussed in the previous chapter) becomes most obvious in the video remix *Me Voy a Bailar Pegao/ I'm Going to Dance Pegao* (2013, 5 min 52 sec) by Ellavled Alcano, born and educated in professional dance in Venezuela. The movie emulates a TV advertisement by sampling fragments from music video clips, TV ads, YouTube clips, moving image and popular films, among which are recognizable Charles Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) and Alec Berg and David Mandel's *Euro Trip* (2004). The short opens with Pope Benedict XVI watching TV at home and being propagated by a teleshopping presenter to embark on a journey to a brand new world, where one could enjoy a lot for less. The broadcaster

³¹³ See also Saioa Olmo Alonso, "An interview with Felipe González Gil of Zemos98, regarding the festival "Copylove: commons, love and the remix" in *A*DESK – Critical Thinking* (online) <http://www.a-desk.org/spip/spip.php?article1593>

³¹⁴ See also <https://euroalter.com/who-we-are/our-organisation>

(purposefully performed by a participant in the WeTube workshop) poses a set of questions – Are you bored? Is your life ordinary? Do you have a job and a salary? Are you ready for autumn swimsuit sales? – emerging on the background of montaged city traffic and sheep herds footage and the accords of *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) theme by John Williams. The soundtrack changes into a rhythmic Cuban music, while the offered solution against trivial comfort and the inertia of everyday life could appear to be a revolutionary system created by the Kikiriwikis – namely, getting rid of all your belongings, income and possessions and enjoying the little things in life. A world map indicating the so called Third World countries (in South America, Africa and Asia) is enthusiastically relabelled into a map of the First World of Dance. Shifting images of palm trees, cocktails and sun are assembled with mock statements by happy customers who recommend Kikiriwikis' traditional hospitality and visiting the First World of Dance as a new form of fun. Among them appears a collaged YouTube cameo of Justin Bieber who also reflects on this new world of freedom. A flashing telephone number encourages spectators to wait no longer and book immediately, which would guarantee not only a welcoming cocktail, but also a free dance lesson. After being convinced by this tempting prospect for endless entertainment, the Pope himself surrenders to the TV advertisement, which functions as a form of contemporary summon, and declares his resignation in order to move to the First World of Dance. The movie ends on a high note with the cheerful sounds of a 1980's music hit *Papachongo*. The DIY (Do-It-Yourself) aesthetics of this video spoof resonates with Henri Jenkins' discussion on the democratic potential of user-generated content (UGC). Through mimicking typical teleshopping and advertising stylistic features, the video manages to construct a sharp critique on consumerism. Re-contextualizing audio and moving image references into a remixed composition encoded with new meanings, also achieves to question popular stereotypes and perceptions of Third World countries. Thus, the creative juxtaposition of content originating from different media and cultural contexts performs a *trans-coding* and subversive function.



Fig. 28. Ellavled Alcano, *Me Voy a Bailar Pegao/I'm Going to Dance Pegao* (2013, 5 min 52 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/64653420>

Tránsito/Crossing (2013, 6 min 9 sec) is a *mockumentary*,³¹⁵ which mixes documentary and fictional elements and presents the testimonials of four characters who tell their own stories of arriving in Spain. Their personal experiences of migration are re-imagined through the narrative about a fictional superhero called Andrea, who had helped them to cross the border by turning each one of them into an animal. A condition everyone had to fulfill was to live like an animal for a year in the new settings. The movie combines the social experiences of Moses Mboma from Sierra Leone living in Spain for eight years, Dana born in Romania and residing in Seville for two years, Carlos from Colombia living in Spain for six years and Piquita from Venezuela also in Spain for eight years. All of them share leaving behind families, friends and home and finding the adjustment to new society, customs and culture very hard, as well as being looked at differently, since being foreigners. The escalating need for migration to a better place had pushed them to meet Andrea – a tall man with red hair and clear eyes, a strict flawless person who demands no mistakes. In order to cross the border, each suffers a transformation into an animal: Moses into a dog, Dana into an elephant, Carlos becomes a monkey (despite his desire of being a more regular pet such as a cat or a dog), and Piquita's metamorphosis shifts her into a penguin. While Andrea obviously signifies white male Western ideals, the conception of inferior cultural Otherness has been conveyed through the allegory of the animals and the characters' zoomorphic experiences. Found footage (of a dog unwanted in a restaurant, an elephant trying to reach the water of a swimming pool, a monkey working as a waiter, a penguin travelling as a bizarre passenger in a plane) has been used and remixed in order to illustrate

³¹⁵ The *mockumentary*, also known as a docucomedy is a type of film or television show which represents fictional events in documentary style to create a parody.

corresponding situations of feeling as an outsider, and a stranger, being different, unwelcomed and unequal. Shot and edited in black & white, the video presents a stylized fable on cultural Otherness and transition not simply in its connotation of crossing geographical space, but rather as the psychological state of transformation that defines a migrant's adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment.

Tránsito/Crossing does not directly transmit animalised representations of the four protagonists, but figuratively evokes that animal-like depiction of immigrants has a long-term tradition in discriminatory discursive formations. For instance, *simianization*, or the representation of racial minorities (especially people of African descent) as apes or monkeys has been a “persistent dehumanizing trope.”³¹⁶ Dehumanized depiction of people does not merely suggest being non-human, but rather having a lower human status, or a subhuman essence (in terms of appearance, morals, behaviour, personal qualities), since nature is arranged hierarchically and humans occupy a higher rank than nonhuman animals. Thus, psychological essentialism and dehumanization also imply that the dehumanized ones are impure, uncanny and dangerous.³¹⁷ Translated into anti-immigrant sentiments and metaphors, the animalization of immigrants also discursively justifies that immigrants (contrary to citizens, who equate with humans) can be hunted, chased, caged, attacked, controlled, domesticated³¹⁸ – all of which reproduce connotations of being inferior. *Tránsito/Crossing*, however, *trans-codes* the *dehumanizing trope* of immigrants' animalisation by deliberately employing the subversive function of the mockumentary (or docucomedy) genre. The protagonists' self-representations and fabricated memories of becoming an animal (in order to cross the Spanish border) satirize and destabilize the dehumanizing discursive practice of animal-like representation of immigrants. Thus, the mixture of fictional and biographical elements functions as a symbolic resistance. The remix was completed by David Gallardo, who is an audio-visual producer, born and educated in Mexicali, Mexico.

³¹⁶ David Livingstone Smith, Ioana Panaitiu. “Aping the Human Essence: Simianization as Dehumanization” in *Simianization Apes, Gender, Class, and Race* (Racism Analysis/Yearbook 6 - 2015/16) (eds. Wulf D. Hund, Charles W. Mills, Silvia Sebastiani). (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2016).

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ See also Otto Santa Ana “‘Like an animal I was treated’: anti-immigrant metaphors in US public discourse” in *Discourse and Society* 10(2), 1999, 191-224.



Fig. 29. David Gallardo, *Tránsito/Crossing* (2013, 6 min 9 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/64718192>

Following a more traditional documentary format, *Interna/Inmate* (2013, 7 min 35 sec) by María Jesús Valenzuela problematizes the restriction of personal and existential space, which migrant housekeepers often experience in host families. The video is composed of short interviews with three women, who have left their home countries and migrated to Spain in order to work as housekeepers. Leaving original professional training and occupation behind, their choice has been justified by the need to support financially their children and families back home. The poetic language of the piece is evoked by long shots of empty interior spaces, tidy living rooms, shipshape cupboards, strictly ordered sets of glasses – symbolizing anonymous domestic spaces, which do not belong to the women who keep them in order. Close-ups of photos of someone else's family members, undefined parents with kids, pictures and souvenirs from trips and holidays that other people have taken serve as substitute mementos for the housekeepers to contemplate about their own children, families and friends far away. The sensation of restricted personal space is enforced by internal camera views towards the surroundings of rigid blocks of flats. The exterior landscapes of city traffic, forests and playgrounds taken from the inside imply the need for desired freedom. A panorama of the sky coincides with the voiceover disclosure of one of the housekeepers who shares that any sense of private space is possible only outside of the contained household settings, only in open air. The interviewees reveal the impossibility to enjoy basic domestic ease such as relaxing in a chair, moving freely in the flats they occupy, staying behind doors closed while living with the persistent consciousness that what resembles a home is actually their workplace. Their personal narratives outline the socio-spatial limitations, which segregate private and public space. In this sense, the home becomes a contested terrain where employers and domestic workers negotiate social boundaries along the divides of class, nationality, ethnicity, as well as spatial

hierarchies of occupying domestic settings.³¹⁹ Empirical studies on domestic labour in Europe reveal ethnification and racialization of paid domestic work, as a legacy of colonial relations and oppression.³²⁰ The invisible status, which migrant and diaspora household workers often experience in the host families, renders them also as “intimate Others.”³²¹ *Interna/Inmate*’s conceptual and structural framework resonates with Helena Taberna’s directing approach in making the documentary *Extranjeras/Foreign Women* (2003), which represents a diversity of personal stories on displacement, senses of belonging discrimination and immigration told by foreign women who live in Madrid. With *Extranjeras* Helena Taberna establishes an immediate space of potential transculturation between audiences and the film’s protagonists by deliberately undertoning her own presence as a mediator in the interviewing process. In a similar manner, *Interna/Inmate* also omits articulation of questions, voice-over, and in-frame presence of the filmmaker, which symbolically emancipates the portrayed individuals from being an object of gaze. Such filming approach expresses sensitivity towards the subjectivity and the agency of the interviewees and highlights cultural difference, instead of rendering cultural Otherness.

In this direction, Isolina Ballesteros recognizes Taberna’s method as a positive alternative to Gayatri Spivak’s prominent essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and its critique on subaltern collectivism and the role of Western intellectuals in substituting and silencing subaltern voices.³²² As Ballesteros argues:

[Helena Taberna] carefully attends to the heterogeneity in the group of immigrants she interviews, and she avoids reinforcing their subaltern position in Spanish society by hiding her “intellectual” presence from the diegesis [...] The filmmaker’s absence from the diegesis has to be read as an aesthetic as much as an ethical statement.³²³

³¹⁹ Pei-Chia Lan, “Negotiating Social Boundaries and Private Zones: The Micropolitics of Employing Migrant Domestic Workers” in *Social Problems* Vol. 50, No. 4 (November 2003), 525-549.

³²⁰ See also Bridget Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work?: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*. (London and New York: Zed Books, 2000)

³²¹ Kimberly A. Chang, L. H. M. Ling, “Globalization and its intimate other: Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong” in *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites and Resistances* (eds. M. H. Marchand and A. S. Runyan) (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 30-47.

³²² According to Spivak, granting collective speech to subalterns from the outside in order to ameliorate their condition, results in two problems: a logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity among heterogeneous people; and dependence upon Western intellectuals to ‘speak for’ the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves.

³²³ Isolina Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (Bristol: Intellect, 2015), 74-5.

Similarly, *Interna/Inmate*'s ethical and aesthetic perspective aims to give voice to migrant domestic workers without reinforcing representations of being dispossessed. It delicately portrays the complexity of negotiating socio-spatial limits, living in diaspora and on the shifting boundary between public and private space. The author of the video – María Jesús Valenzuela – was born in Chile where graduated Fine Arts and later studied at International Center of Photography (New York, USA). Her professional experience with video art is graspable in the overall aesthetic language of the piece.

In conclusion, it can be observed that while the first two remixes produced at *Remapping Europe* media lab in Seville emphasize the creative employment of sampling as a *trans-coding* artistic practice, the final video counts on representation and personal narratives in order to provide a nuanced depiction of immigrants' experiences and standpoints.

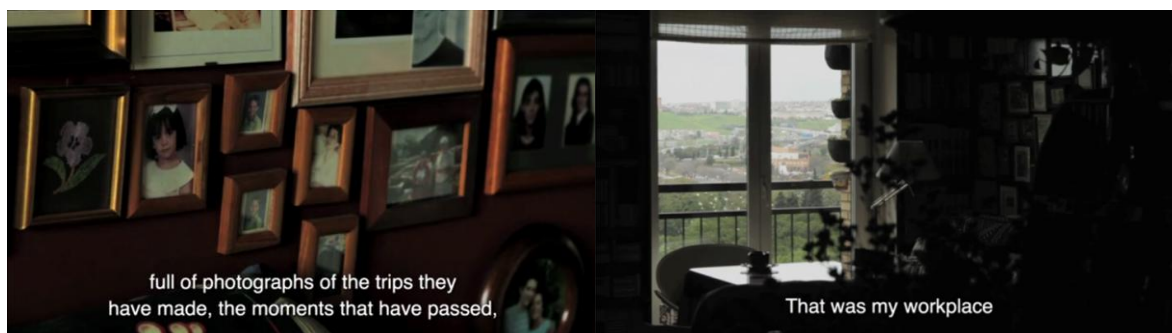


Fig. 30. María Jesús Valenzuela, *Interna/Inmate* (2013, 7 min 35 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/68031167>

5.2.2 *Remapping Europe atelier* – Poland

5.2.2.1 *Poland – history of migration*

Poland's history of migration is defined mainly by emigration – until the end of the twentieth century, taking place both in large waves and continual yearly movements. The shift of Polish borders westwards after the end of WWII caused mass displacement and forced resettlement of almost eight million people of Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian and German origin. Ethnic deportation after 1945 was a tool primarily meant to constitute a homogenous nation within the new country's borders. The post-war settings also provoked another large wave of migration when approximately three hundred

thousand Jews of Polish origin returned to Poland. In the following years, however, about two-thirds of them moved to Israel and Palestine, Western Europe and overseas.

Since the 1950s, the majority of Polish emigrants to the Federal Republic of Germany were *Aussiedler* (ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states). In 1968 another large wave of outflow migration started, when up to twenty-five thousand Polish Jews left the country. In the 1980's during the suppression of the *Solidarność* Movement (the Solidarity Movement, which fostered the democratisation of the country) and the establishment of martial law another two hundred and fifty thousand Polish citizens emigrated abroad. Since the collapse of the Communist Bloc in 1989, the nature of Polish migration can be defined as in-flux. Poland is still regarded as a emigrant country, however its strategic position between Eastern and Western Europe inevitably makes Poland a transit country for migrants. Poland is a host country especially for immigration from its neighbouring countries – Ukraine, Belarus and Russia – due its relative rapid economic growth in comparison with other post-communist European countries after the 1990's.³²⁴

When joining the European Union in 2004, Polish citizens were allowed to work legally in three EU member states – United Kingdom, Ireland and Sweden, who opened their labour markets from the start without implementing transition periods. This resulted in mass migration, especially to the UK – mainly due to high unemployment rates in Poland around 2004. After 2006, when the reduction of unemployment has started, the main incentive for emigration to UK became the higher standard of living. According to the Main Statistical Office in Poland, migration outflows peaked in 2007 when almost 2.3 millions Poles lived abroad, particularly in Western Europe (Germany and UK).³²⁵ In historical perspective, this wave of economic emigration has been the largest since Polish emigration to the United States in the end of the nineteenth century when 1.5 million Poles moved to the US and a later wave in the beginning of the twentieth century, amounting to 3.5 million Polish immigrants in the US. It can be observed that post-enlargement migrations are continuation of pre-existing networks and earlier flows of irregular workers. Migrants with double Polish-German citizenship,

³²⁴ "Country profile – Poland" in *Focus Migration*, (online) <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/Poland.2810.0.html?&L=1>

³²⁵ Main Statistical Office, Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach emigracji z Polskiw latach 2004 –2012. October 2013, (online) http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/L_Szacunek_emigracji_z_Polski_lata_2004-2012_XI_2012.pdf

for instance, use their passport to work in Germany and the Netherlands.³²⁶ According to UK's Office for National Statistics, as of 2014 almost eight hundred thousand people born in Poland reside in the UK. There is also a wider range of British Poles population, including descendents of more than two hundred thousand immigrants who settled in the UK after WWII. Thus, Poles are the second-largest overseas-born community of immigrants in the UK after residents born in India.³²⁷ The Polish language has become the second most spoken language in England and the third most spoken language, after English and Welsh, in the UK.

5.2.2.2 Poland – mainstream media discourse on migration

Immigration, diversity and intercultural understanding are challenging topics for public discussion in a nationally homogeneous country as Poland. Simultaneously, the number of immigrants gradually grows. Thus, mainstream media in Poland is usually involved in constructing a selective and simplified representation of immigrants in the country. Moreover, fragmented media reporting and misbalance of representation of international, national and local events generates an image of immigrants built on extremes. According to Dorota Borodaj and David Sypniewski, “migrants in Poland are either invisible or motley and colourful, like souvenirs.”³²⁸ On the one hand immigrant stories in the news are short lived despite the efforts of grassroots organizations and community activists to raise awareness and bring visible change. On the other hand, mass media circulates “the friendly images from breakfast television, where foreigners tend to be colourful and exotic. It's much easier to accept that kind of *stranger*.”³²⁹

The lack of nuanced media representations of migrants, as well as the missing multiplicity of perspectives and migrants' voices translates in biased perceptions and anti-immigrant sentiments. According to the Main Statistical Office in Poland, Polish like Roma people the least (also Romanians, who are popularly considered the same).

³²⁶ Agnieszka Weiner, “Emigration from Poland in the Historical Perspective” in *Migration, Citizenship, Education*. (Online)
<http://migrationeducation.de/25.1.html?&rid=20&cHash=8d83ad503e621157d24ff01e7e3289cb>

³²⁷ Office for National Statistics, *Population of the United Kingdom by Country of Birth and Nationality 2015*(xls table) (online)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/populationoftheunitedkingdombycountryofbirthandnationality>

³²⁸ Dorota Borodaj and David Sypniewski, “Introduction (PL)” in *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 139.

³²⁹ Ibid.

Jews, Arabs, the Vietnamese and Chechens are also among the most disliked groups. Polish people are in favour of Czechs, Slovaks, Spaniards and Italians at the most.³³⁰ The highest percentage of economic migrants comes from Ukraine (both working with legal permits or on the black market). The relationship between both countries is complex – according to statistics Ukrainian people are also among the ones least favoured in Poland. At the same time, during the Ukraine's transition to independence, Polish people expressed strong support for Ukraine's Orange Revolution, which resonated with Poland's own anti-Communist opposition fifteen years beforehand. A large range of Ukrainian female migrants are employed as domestic workers, known in Poland and particularly in Warsaw under the "Ukrainian cleaner" label – a social phenomenon, which has stirred a media scandal in 2012.

After a football match, won by Ukraine versus Sweden during Euro 2012, Polish radio presenters expressed disappointment from the lost game by sharing discriminative jokes about Ukrainian domestic workers. On their popular morning radio show, the presenters chitchatted about firing and raping their cleaners: "I will fire my Ukrainian! (...) I don't even know what mine looks like, because I only see her on her knees",³³¹ In response to the media controversy that followed both radio presenters argued that their jokes should be understood as a Monty Pythonesque satire. The event has raised a clash of confronting public opinions, defending or criticizing the radio show – some reminding that a year earlier one of the same radio hosts had called an Indian official a "nigger" and a "bushman".³³² Thus, the incident has triggered an intense debate on immigrant's perceptions in Poland and a chain of critical reactions by journalist, intellectuals and the public.

For instance, in 2013 the Ukrainian journalist Kateryna Panova worked undercover as a Polish domestic cleaner. During one month she regularly received 'work' messages requesting romantic involvement or sexual intercourse. Her diary was published under the title *I Cleaned for Polish Masters* in *Polish Newsweek*. Her story revealed the thin line between sex and domestic labour, as an expression of Polish attitudes towards migrants coming from East Europe.³³³

³³⁰ Ibid. 138.

³³¹ Ibid., 137.

³³² Michal Bilewicz "Polish People speak about the Stranger: The Psychology of Hate Speech" *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 140-1.

³³³ Ibid. 131

On the occasion of the same radio incident, Michal Bilewicz discusses discriminative jokes as a form of hate speech. According to him, humour becomes the only channel to discuss difficult topics as immigrants' life and minority groups. As he shares, "the reluctance to utter the word "Jew" [is] related to the inability to build an open dialogue with Jews."³³⁴ Similarly, Polish nationals feel uncomfortable while speaking about 'black' people – "not wanting to offend anyone, we prefer to avoid the subject or at least not to pay attention to the skin colour of these people so often discriminated against and humiliated in Poland."³³⁵ Thus, negative stereotypes are suppressed, but not overcome. In reference to Michael Billig's research on racist discourse, Bilewicz supports the position that racist humour function as a platform to express in a socially acceptable manner messages which are politically incorrect. Similarly, Bilewicz recognizes racist jokes and laughter in Polish media as an effective tool of exclusion and discrimination of migrants and minority groups.

The outlined media context in Poland highlights the role of discursive practices in the (re)production of intolerance towards migrants. The upcoming analysis on the creative output from the *Remapping Europe* ateliers in Poland will study whether the created media remixes deconstruct Polish mainstream media discourses. It will be also questioned whether humour could play a subversive role.

5.2.2.3 Poland – Remapping Europe media remixes

The *Remapping Europe* remix ateliers in Poland were organized at two locations – in Warsaw and in Lublin. The workshops in Warsaw took place in January and February 2013 involving seven young visual artists with migrant backgrounds. For the majority of them, the concept of migration was understood in terms of a free and conscious choice. Their personal experiences involve travel, searching for roots or better education and interpersonal relationships with partners and friends. Thus, the seven participants in Warsaw created personal reflections treating family stories and migration as a choice.

To the multiplicity of perspectives presented by the Polish case contributed the remix atelier in the Polish-Ukrainian borderland city of Lublin. The city hosts refugee camps for people from Chechnya and other neighbouring countries and is a home for a

³³⁴ Michal Bilewicz "Polish People speak about the Stranger: The Psychology of Hate Speech" *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 140.

³³⁵ Ibid.

number of foreign students. Thus, the created remixed works in Lublin explore popular perceptions and the image of eastern neighbours and immigrants in Poland. The young people who participated as media-makers in the initiative were residents and students of border villages and their specific interest focused on local specificities and Polish eastern neighbourhood. Participants made use of existing imagery of Ukrainians in order to encode new meanings and new remix videos. The atelier was released in collaboration with the NGO Homo Faber.³³⁶

Nigdzie/Nowhere (2013, 6 min 6 sec) by David Sypniewski is a personal reflection on the author's shifting identity constructed in a liminal third space between two countries – Poland, where David's parents originate from, and France – where he was himself born. This video impression tells the story of the author's mother who was a film director and a politically engaged singer, who immigrated together with her husband to France because of the political situation in Poland. Thus emerges David's search for roots and simultaneous belonging to two countries, which defines his transcultural identity. In this sense, Kwame Anthony Appiah's understanding of cosmopolitanism as the state of being "rooted" in several cultures and communities, re-surfaces as a relevant conceptual framework for interpreting this video piece. *Nowhere* samples photographic images from David Sypniewski's personal archive (stage performances of his mother – Natasza Czarminska (1950-2004) and family pictures with her) with video recorded interviews on TV where Natasza reflects on her experience as an immigrant. Her autobiographical narrative is communicated in Polish language, while the in-frame composition is completed with a text layer in English, which synthesizes Natasza's viewpoint: "Immigration is like motherhood. When you start to have a child, you can't stop having it. You have it for life. When you start being an immigrant, you cannot stop being it."³³⁷ Thus, David Sypniewski follows the common practice of text-based (video) art to use written language as a medium for the expression of personal and biographical motives. With this regard, can be mentioned the work of the French conceptual artist and photographer Sophie Calle. Thematically Calle deals with identity, intimacy, human vulnerability and feminist-informed concerns, and within her artistic treatments she often mixes image with text. For instance, the

³³⁶ See also Dorota Borodaj, *Remapping Europe. Films and Performances* (European Cultural Foundation, 2014), 25.

³³⁷ Natasza Czarminska in David Sypniewski, *Nigdzie/Nowhere* (2013, DVD 6 min 6 sec), 00 min 55 sec.

photographs from her well-known series *Take care of yourself* (2007)³³⁸ represent the artist's face and body covered with projected on them words from the last letter, which Calle received from her ex-partner. In a comparable manner, David Sypniewski constructs the intimate aura of *Nigdzie/Nowhere* by overlaying text (the words of his belated mother), both as a graphic and a conceptual element. The aesthetic language of his video mixes recurring footage of contemporary dance performed by a young woman on the background of projected images and portraits of his mother together with split-screen compositions of abstracted urban spaces, which entail David's cosmopolitan and fragmented identity. The video also re-appropriates fragments from communist propaganda films and *Alice in Wonderland* (Norman Z. McLeod, 1933) as an allusion of his parents' political immigration to France as a new (wonder)land. The juxtaposition of private archival material (such as family photos) with found footage (the propaganda reels) restates that *the personal is political*³³⁹. The emotional fabric of the work evokes perceptions of absence, personal loss and ambiguity of belonging, which has been artistically conveyed by the re-contextualization and sampling of personal, media and film archives. The video's overall structural framework of mixed textures and split realities also entails the fragmented nature of the author's transcultural identity. David Sypniewski is a practicing community artist with an educational background in cultural animation and intercultural dialogue from both Poland and France.

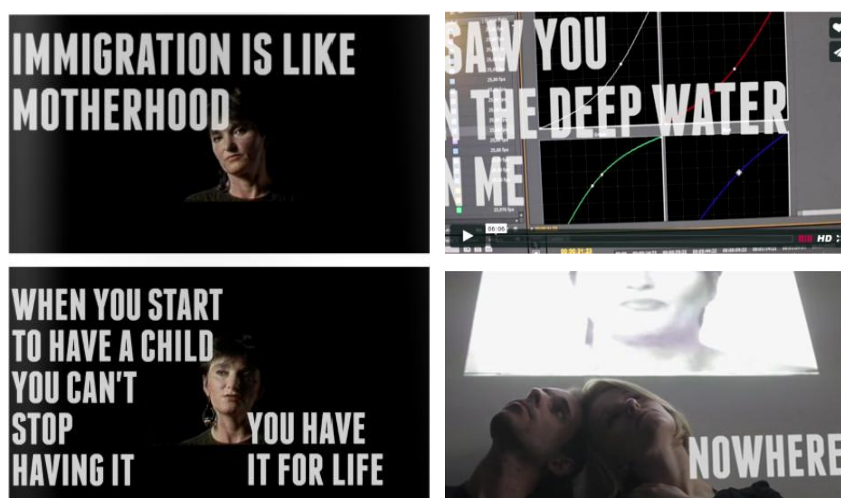


Fig. 31. David Sypniewski, *Nigdzie/Nowhere* (2013, 6 min 6 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/74260474>

³³⁸ *Take care of yourself* (2007) is named after the last line of a break-up letter Calle received from her ex. As a way of taking care of herself, Calle transformed this experience into an art project by asking 107 women to read, re-interpret, perform, re-enact and understand the letter for her.

³³⁹ The phrase *Personal is Political* stands for the connections between personal experience and larger social and political structures. It is popularized as a rallying slogan by second-wave feminism and feminist artists in the 1960's and the 1970's.

Dowód/Proof (2013, 6 min 4 sec) by Alicja Plachówna-Vasilevska is another work produced at the Warsaw media atelier, which makes an extensive use of sampling content from diverse visual archives. *Proof* also employs collage and cut-outs animation technique in order to tell the family story of Alicja and her Macedonian husband Boyan. The video is built as a satirical re-enactment of the immigration office exam, which both spouses had to pass in order to prove that Boyan is not ‘illegal’ and able to reside in Poland. “Does your husband take sugar in his tea? What colour is your wife’s toothbrush? Which side of the bed does your wife sleep on?”³⁴⁰ are among the questions which test and prove cross-border love. With a humorous touch this remix tells Boyan and Alicja’s struggle of facing red tape, being visited and examined by public servants, queuing in immigration offices and being part of the machinery of obtaining a residence permit, which in a Foucauldian manner exercises policing and control on their private family life. The cut-out episodes juxtapose images of passports, stamps and immigration forms, which signify (border) control with hand-retouched photos of Boyan and Alicja that resemble retro post-cards and entail happy living together.



³⁴⁰ Alicja Plachówna-Vasilevska, *Dowód/Proof* (2013, 6 min 4 sec), 2 min 51 sec.



Fig. 32. Alicja Plachówna-Vasilevska, *Dowód/Proof* (2013, 6 min 4 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/76207991>

Indirectly *Dowód/Proof* reiterates the aesthetic language of cut-outs stop motion graphics, established by the early generation of the Polish School of Animation and its pioneer of the cut-outs technique Jan Lenica. Lenica's most acclaimed film *Labyrinth* (1963) can be interpreted as a political allegory and a metaphorical critique of Polish totalitarian society behind the Iron Curtain. The mythological references are recognizable, not only in the title, but also in the image of the protagonist – a man with wings, or a modern Icarus, who arrives in a beautiful Art Nouveau metropolis. Soon after, however, the impressive facades of the city reveal a labyrinth of violence, deceit, annihilation and surveillance. Zero manifestation of freedom is guaranteed by the controlling gaze of a big eye (to evoke Big Brother from George Orwell's novel *1984*). The anti-utopian cityscape is completed with the picture of its main monument – a killing machine. Lenica's cut-outs aesthetics recycles Art Nouveau imagery and fantasy motives from Georges Melies' films, as well as it borrows from Max Ernst's Dada and Surrealist collages. Thus, he employs the intertextual and intermedial potential of sampling repertoires in order to assemble his own social and political satire.

Drawing a direct analogy between the artistic dimensions of one of the masterpieces of Polish animation, *Labyrinth*, and a 'user-generated' media remix, such as *Dowód/Proof* is unnecessary. Still, the logics of employing remix as a critical and creative praxis of symbolic resistance remains the same. The author of the remix *Dowód/Proof* Alicja Plachówna-Vasilevska works as a career counsellor and is actively involved in artistic projects and social issues activism.

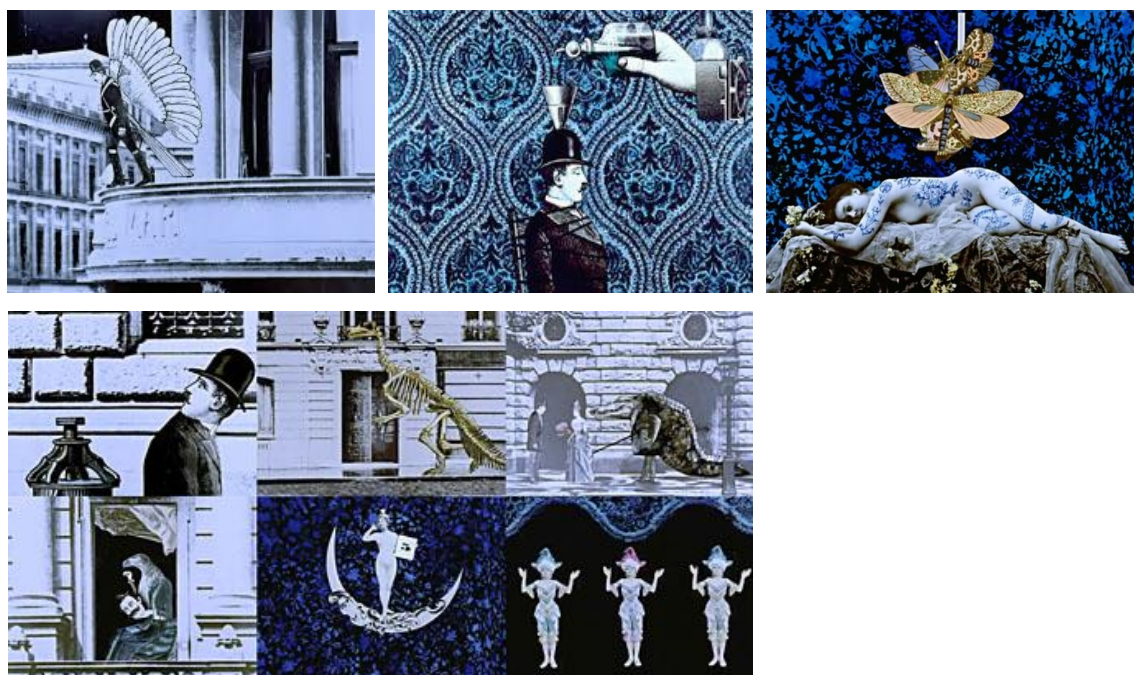


Fig. 33. Jan Lenica, *Labyrinth* (cut-out animation, 15 min, 1963) <http://culture.pl/en/artist/jan-lenica>

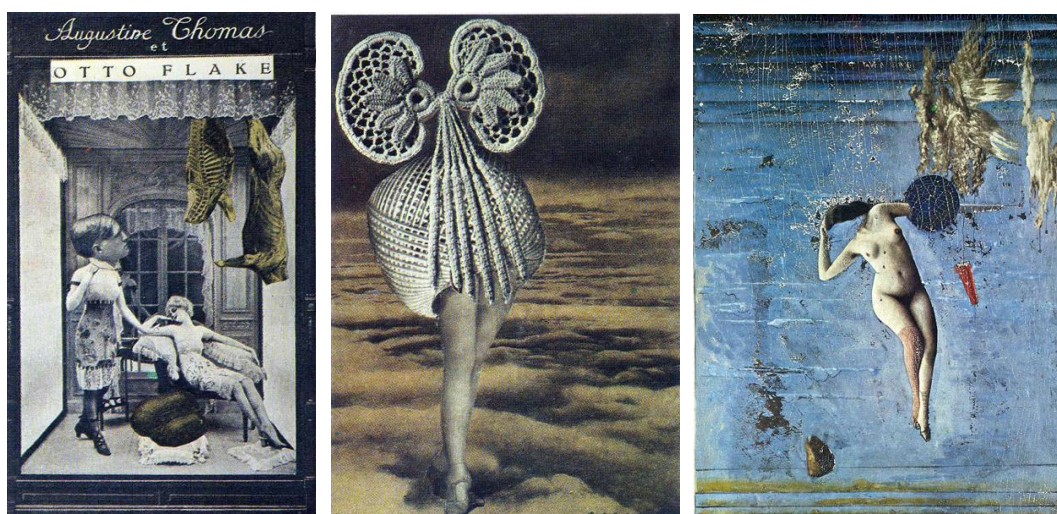


Fig. 34. Max Ernst, *Untitled* (collage, paper, 1920), *Above the Clouds* (collage, paper, 1920), *Pleiades* (collage, paper, 1920) <http://www.wikiart.org/en/max-ernst/>

Media recontextualization and the theme of border control reaches further treatment within the work of Magdalena Kuzar *ABC PRZEMYTNIKA/A Smuggler's ABC* (2013, 9 min 56 sec). Her video eloquently emulates the visual grammar of popular YouTube tutorials on fashion, make-up, cooking, language training and so on. In front of her webcam, however, she offers a tutorial on how to smuggle alcohol and

cigarettes across the Ukrainian-Polish border. Magdalena comes from a village close to the border where the myth of smuggling has always been a part of reality and a topic for anecdotes. Since smugglers invent creative ways in order to escape border control, Magdalena offers a grotesque solution on transporting cigarettes and alcohol in one's underwear and clothes. Her instructional video includes typical for the YouTube tutorial format interactive pop-up windows with key points and comments. Moreover, Magdalena enthusiastically encourages viewers to visit her website, where more smuggling tricks can be found. By recycling the genre of user-generated tutorials her spoof *trans-codes* media mechanisms and consequently deconstructs mass media stereotypes of illegal transfer of goods and irregular immigration. Magdalena Kuzar is a graduate in journalism and communication from Lublin and an organiser of the international photography contest *Teatr w Obiektywie*.

In this context, I would argue that the subversive role of humour operates via *trans-coding* of semantic structures. Moreover, subversive humour itself functions as a *trans-coding* modality and communication mechanism, which destabilizes dominant discourses. As Mikhail Bakhtin has written, carnival and the *carnavalesque* allow for the mixture of opposing categories and hierarchies (such as king/beggar, fact/fantasy, heaven/hell), which results in resistance to authority, and potential transformation. Mingling 'high culture' with the profane de-privileges hegemonic voices.³⁴¹ Thus, as Peter Stallybrass and Allan White have noticed in relation to carnival and grotesque realism, "already in Bakhtin there is the germinal notion of *transcodings* and *displacements* effected between the high/low image of the physical body and other social domains."³⁴² Furthermore, by drawing upon Jacques Lacan's theory of representation, Alenka Zupančič suggests a distinction between 'conservative' and 'subversive' humour. A simplified version of her complex discourse would imply that 'conservative' humour repeats and coincides with its comic representation. Contrary, the 'subversive edge' begins with "the moment in which substance, necessity, and essence all lose their immediate – and thus abstract – self-identity or coincidence with themselves."³⁴³ It can be further suggested that in both cases – 'conservative' and 'subversive' – the comic qualities of humour in terms of laughter mechanisms, as

³⁴¹ Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and his world*. (1941) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

³⁴² Peter Stallybrass and Allan White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 9.

³⁴³ Alenka Zupančič. *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 34.

studied by Henri Bergson³⁴⁴, are independent from any transgressive or subversive function. For instance, if Magdalena's video were a clear-cut mimicry of a regular tutorial, it could still have comic and amusing features. However, it would coincide and reaffirm its self-representation. If she had chosen to create a sketch featuring herself while crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border and smuggling goods in a ridiculous outfit, the result would have been equally comic and entertaining. Still, the sketch would have only repeated the self-identity of the same semantic structure that it tries to mock. Thus, both of the given examples would have followed the kernel of 'conservative' or affirmative humour. In opposition, the subversive edge of her video *ABC PRZEMYTNIKA/A Smuggler's ABC* emerges not from repeating, but from changing the 'code', or from *trans-coding* the illegal practice of smuggling into a trivial activity, which she can undoubtedly preach online. The clandestine status of trafficking is *trans-coded* into the exhibitionistic/voyeuristic character of social media, such as YouTube. Therefore, the sampling of two mutually exclusive semantic structures into a *carnavalesque* fusion plays a transgressive and a subversive role.

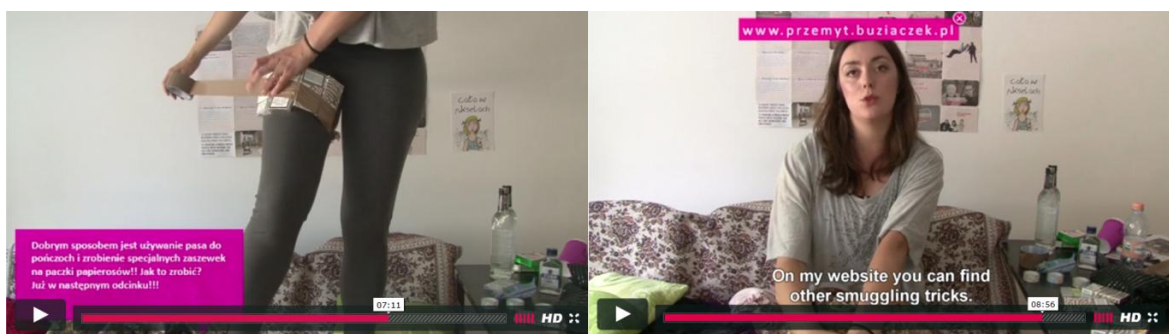


Fig. 35. Magdalena Kuzar *ABC PRZEMYTNIKA/A Smuggler's ABC* (2013, 9 min 56 sec), stills:
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/74273860>

³⁴⁴ Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900) (trans. Fred Rothwell) (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2005).

5.2.3 Remapping Europe atelier – Turkey

5.2.3.1 Turkey – history of migration

Turkey has been largely considered a country of emigration throughout much of the twentieth century, excluding the inflow of Turkish Muslim populations of the Ottoman Empire who were left out of the borders of the newly established Turkish Republic in 1923. In the beginning of the twentieth century were initiated outflows of non-Muslim populations from Anatolia within a nation-building process. This phenomenon continued until 1960's and 1970's in the shape of a labour migration of Turkish nationals towards Western Europe and particularly Germany. Large-scale Turkish labour emigration began with a pact, which the Turkish and West German governments signed in 1961. The agreement coincided with an economic boom in West Germany and the increasing number of Turkish internal migrants from rural areas to major urban centres. According to the pact, unskilled migrants, known as *gastarbeiters* (guest workers) would contribute to German economy with temporary labour while reaching decrease of Turkey's unemployment. It was expected that the guest workers would return to Turkey after acquiring new skills in order to reorient Turkish economy from rural agriculture towards industry. Similar agreements were signed also with other European countries, such as Austria, Belgium, Holland, France, and Sweden. This emigration flow continued until recently via a family reunification scheme and asylum application track. It often involved emigration of skilled labourers too. The oil crisis of 1973 and the economic recession in Western Europe that followed ended the recruitment of labour from Turkey. Simultaneously, the economic boom in the Middle East allowed Turkish workers to emigrate to Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.³⁴⁵ Nowadays, there are up to 6 million people of Turkish origin living in Germany, representing the country's largest ethnic minority.

Another wave of emigration comprised of asylum seekers heading to Western Europe, which has emerged since the mid-1980's. Turkey's large Kurdish minority, accounting for twenty percent of the total population, has been seeking protection from Turkish military's intervention in civilian politics in 1980. The conflict includes the right to use the Kurdish language as well as demands for the establishment of a separate Kurdish state. According to government statistics, the violence surrounding the Kurdish

³⁴⁵ See also Netzwerk Migration in Europa e.V. "Turkey: A Transition from Emigration to Immigration" in *Migration, Citizenship, Education* (online) <http://migrationeducation.de/27.0.html>

problem in Turkey and the efforts to suppress the separatist movement have led to the displacement of approximately three hundred and thirty thousand people. According to the Turkish Human Rights Association, however, the number of people displaced internally accounts for more than 2.5 million, the majority of whom have been Kurds. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics indicates that during the course of the 1990's almost three hundred and forty thousand Turkish citizens applied for asylum across Europe.³⁴⁶

In the last quarter of the twentieth century Turkey experienced a significant transformation and it has changed its role in international migration regimes. Since the end of the century Turkey's migration patterns have been continuously in-flux. The heavy political context, defined by a number of events with international significance and outreach, such as the oil crisis in 1973, the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, the dissolution of the Yugoslavia have affected migratory in- and outflows. Overall, in the period between 1923 and 1997 Turkey received more than 1.6 million people – a significant number of whom coming from the Balkans. During the Cold War, thousands of asylum seekers from the Soviet Union and the Communist states in Eastern Europe migrated to Turkey. Recognized as refugees some were resettled to third countries such as US and Canada by the UNHCR. Another major wave of immigration occurred when more than three hundred thousand Turks and Pomaks (Bulgarian-speaking Muslims) were expelled from Bulgaria in 1989 after refusing to change their names to Slavic ones within an assimilation campaign launched by the Communist regime. After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, one third of these refugees returned to Bulgaria. The rest acquired Turkish citizenship.³⁴⁷ Since the second half of the 1990's Turkey has also shifted its status into a transit country to the European Union for irregular migration for Middle East countries, such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan. It became also a destination country for regular and irregular migrants from the former Soviet Bloc.

After traditionally being known as a country of emigration, nowadays Turkey is facing challenges related to its immigration and asylum policies. The established immigration policy has been determined by a nation-building process and efforts to sustain a homogenous national identity. Turkey's ambition to join the European Union

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ See also "Country profile – Turkey" in *Focus Migration* (online) <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/Turkey-Update-04-20.6026.0.html?&L=1>

and the associated political liberalization is however related to the adoption of policies that recognize Turkey's ethnic and cultural diversity. Furthermore, due to Turkey's geographic location and EU's attempts towards an emerging "common" asylum policy, Turkey has become a country of first asylum during the ongoing refugee crisis. The refugee crisis has triggered a new phase in the EU-Turkey relationship, embodied in EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan dating from 2015 aimed at prevention of irregular migration to the EU and distribution of humanitarian assistance in Syria.³⁴⁸ In brief, the agreement allows Greece to return to Turkey new irregular migrants, who travel across the Aegean to the Greek islands. In exchange, EU member states will foster resettlement for Syrian refugees living in Turkey, liberalize visa regimes for Turkish citizens and increase financial support for Turkey's refugee population. The early stage of the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal has stirred a range of critical perspectives, also challenging EU's ethics of hospitality.

5.2.3.2 Turkey – mainstream media discourse on migration

Media landscape in Turkey can be defined by several problematic characteristics – concentrated media ownership (seventy percent owned by few cross-media groups), nationalist rhetoric and censorship and pressure on freedom of speech (serving political elites, the military, the government) – all of which affect public discourse and media representation of migrants in Turkey. Often the news coverage of mainstream media depends on corporate interests, thus migrants, minorities and the working-class segments of the society are rather misrepresented. In this context, attempts for independent journalistic practices and alternative representations are rather regarded as dangerous endeavours.³⁴⁹ Despite some attempts and progress for democratization of media output, the structural factors, such as monopolised media landscape and the instrumentalization of mainstream media by the state, continue to dominate the produced discourses.

The main focus of mainstream media regarding migration has often been to project the need for urbanizing the migrant population of Istanbul. Thus, internal

³⁴⁸ European Commission, *First Report on the progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement* (April 2016) (online) http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160420/report_implementation_eu-turkey_agreement_nr_01_en.pdf

³⁴⁹ Ruken Barış, "Media Landscapes – Turkey" in *European Journalism Centre* (EJC) (online), http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/turkey

migration has become institutionalised. For instance, the residents of the meant for renewal neighbourhood Talabasi is composed of migrants from different parts of Anatolia, including Kurdish and Roma people. Correspondingly, (im)migrants representation reproduces segregation and follows specific models – “when we consider the class-based references to migrants in popular TV series or tabloid news reports, it is clear that hostility towards migrants still exists,”³⁵⁰ as Sirri Süreyya Önder considers. According to him, it was the Taksim Gezi Park protests, which offered a different vision of the society and correspondingly the migrant communities. The uprisings started with outrage against the transformation of the natural park Gezi into a shopping mall, within a development plan on urban renewal of Istanbul. Subsequently, the protests and strikes expanded across Turkey into a larger counter-movement against government’s suppression of freedom of press and encroachment on Turkey’s secularization. The Gezi resistance also revealed that mainstream media and the Turkey’s political class were unaware of the existence of alternative culture of individuals, who came together to communicate in networks via a diversity of channels (especially social media). Similarly, Sirri Süreyya Önder argues, mass media and the political elites have ignored the Kurdish population and the crimes committed against them. Önder recognizes a profound connection between the people who initiated Gezi and migrants living in the renewal areas of Istanbul:

The sense of togetherness was made possible by the fact that the migrants, who formed a class alliance with intellectuals, moved their own struggle to anew area. Rather than a representational relationship, the relationship between Gezi and the migrants is, therefore, a relationship of direct participation and one that is also reciprocal. In fact, it is precisely for this reason that the renewal areas are seen as dangerous. The alliance of the Gezi mind-set and that of the migrants is essentially the vision of which urban renewal is afraid.³⁵¹

While the Gezi resistance has been compared to the Occupy movement, Turkish mainstream TV stations, including MNSBC-affiliated NTV and CNN Turk downplayed the protest, especially at its early stage. Out of Turkey’s 80 million population, 3.5 million people joined and participated within almost five thousand demonstrations across Turkey, while eight thousand of them were injured and five people were killed. Still, the mainstream media’s reaction was to ignore the events. It has become

³⁵⁰ Sirri Süreyya Önder, “Occupying Cities, Liberating Minds” in *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 121.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.* 121-2.

proverbial that at the night of the protest's peak, CNN Turk chose to air a documentary on penguins instead. Eventually, the major news channels started to mediate the events, while an online petition asked for CNN International to withdraw its heading from the Turkish franchise. The penguin image became the emblem of criticism on mainstream media and related caricatures. Some of the critical expressions included a comic magazine's cover representing penguins wearing gas masks. In this direction, the upcoming discussion will study the potential of creative expressions to encode novel meanings and subvert mass media discourses.

5.2.3.3 Turkey – Remapping Europe media remixes

The media atelier in Istanbul involved sixteen young media creators with migrant backgrounds. It took place in March and April 2013 composed of three parts and the central topics treated by the created remixes were internal migration and urban transformation. The first group of meetings was devoted to lectures and debates on (digital) storytelling and remix. It also included talks by academics and artists on intellectual property rights and free culture. The programme also offered sessions on the technical aspects of video and media-making. In addition, the *Remapping Europe* programme incorporated a public seminar with academics and media professionals who discussed perceptions of migration in the media and possible alternative perspectives. The second part of the atelier was meant for research conducted by each participant and collection of materials from different archives. At that stage, the project integrated meetings between media-makers from all participating hub countries in order to open a space for exchange of ideas and experience among them. The final part of the workshops allowed for completion of the individual remix projects and presentation of the results during *Documentarist* and *Which Human Rights? Festival* in Istanbul.³⁵²

³⁵² See also Gokce Su Yogurtcuoglu, *Remapping Europe. Films and Performances* (European Cultural Foundation, 2014), 65.

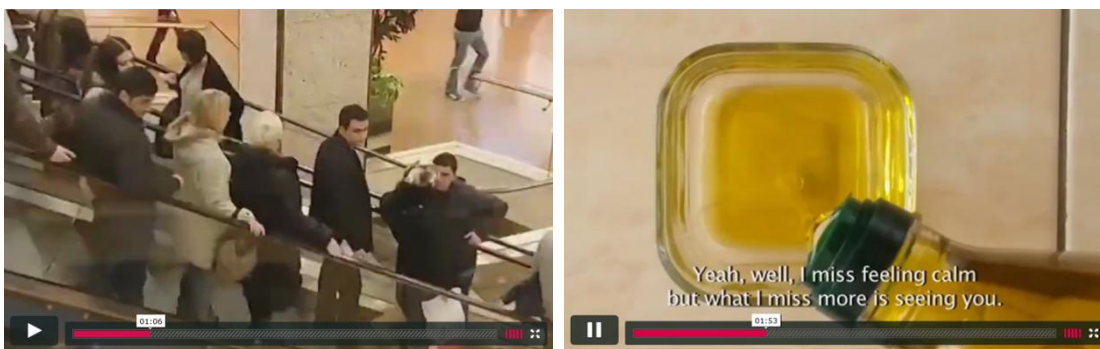


Fig. 36. Ayse Aybuke Samast, *Mobile Inner Peace/Mobil Ic Huzur* (2013, 5 min 33 sec)
<https://vimeopro.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/68856140>

Mobile Inner Peace/Mobil Ic Huzur (2013, 5 min 33 sec) is a remix directed by Ayse Aybuke Samast, who works as an architect in Istanbul and is interested in urban studies. Her video reflects on possible feelings of peace and belonging when shifting places and migrating to urban life. It juxtaposes cityscapes of hectic traffic, rushing groups of pedestrians and urban chaos with the intimate peace and habits of private domestic spaces. The realization of this short movie counts on remixed amateur videos recorded and submitted to an online platform by people willing to participate in this media remix project. Close-ups of cups of tea, cooking utensils and food, plants on one's balcony, everyday objects – reminiscences of family relations, appear as the only sanctuary from busy urban life. The compilation of moving images is accompanied by the soundtrack of telephone conversations between friends and relatives, which function as an imaginary connection between distant (urban) places. The video is an indirect reflection on Ayse Aybuke Samast's personal history of migration – between Bursa (her birthplace in the Marmara region of Turkey), Cardiff (Wales) where she was raised, Turkey's capital Ankara, where she studied and Istanbul, where she currently lives and works. In this sense, according to her, "almost every one of us can be considered a migrant, since the meaning of place is changing."³⁵³ Moreover, the remix manifests Turkey's internal migration as one of the most important factors, which determines the country's socio-economic structure – once a country with 80% rural residents, nowadays 75% of Turkey's population lives in the cities. Thus, this unpredictable, rapid and unplanned urbanization has generated new socio-economic classes and cultures.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ Ayse Aybuke Samast, *Remapping Europe. Films and Performances* (European Cultural Foundation, 2014), 67.

³⁵⁴ See also Nese Erdilek, "Turkey and Internal Migration" in *Remixing Europe*. (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 124.

Mobile Inner Peace can be related and thematically positioned within an emerging wave of creative initiatives and artistic expressions, which critically reinterpret the socio-political aspects of urban transformation across Turkey. With this regard, it should be specifically mentioned the documentary *Ekümenopolis: City Without Limits* (2011) by Imre Azem, who draws a striking critique on the neo-liberal urbanization of Istanbul. His film reconstructs Istanbul's cityscape via animation, edited footage and interviews with historians, architects, planners, investors, city-dwellers and community leaders, who describe the rapid urban change marked by concentration of capital and displacement of poor and working-class people. Imre Azem's last two documentaries *Agoraphobia* (2013) and *Non-Space: The Collapse of the City as a Commodity* (2015) delve into the same problems.

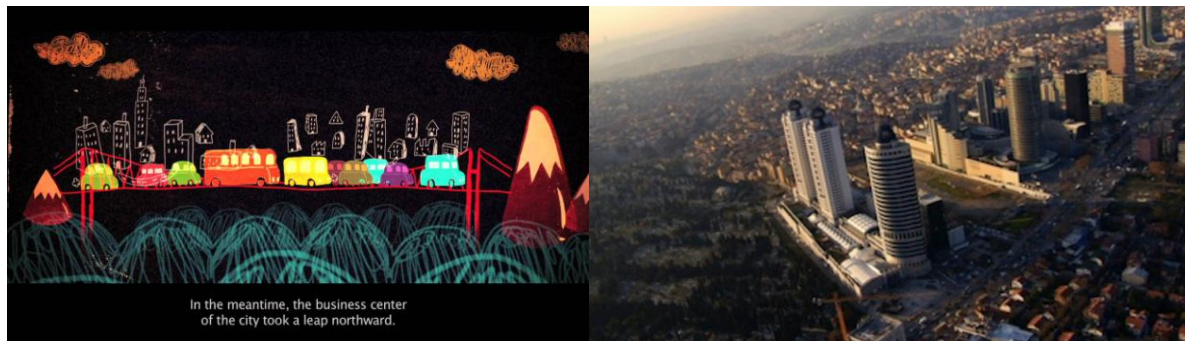


Fig. 37. Imre Azem, *Ekümenopolis: City Without Limits* (2011)
http://www.ekumenopolis.net/#/en_US/watch

In a similar direction, Melis Coker (also a graduate in Architecture) unpacks the background story behind the urban regeneration of the *Tarlabaşı* neighbourhood in the Beyoğlu district in Istanbul. Today, 278 historical buildings are being rebuilt, and the video interrogates at what cost this process of urban renewal takes place. *How Do You Know Tarlabaşı/ Tarlabaşı'ni Nasıl Bilirsiniz?* (2013, 5 min 21 sec) poses questions on gentrification, displacement, forced migration, loss of authenticity and cultural memory. The video retells the history of the neighbourhood since the 1950's forced migration of non-Muslims minorities due to economic circumstances. Through remixing and constructing a mosaic from archival footage and photographs, the work discusses the harmonious cultural co-existence of Armenian, Greek and Jewish minorities and depicts Tarlabaşı as a transcultural urban space before its evacuation in the 1950's. In sharp contract with this romanticized picture of the past, the short closes with a 3D modelled version of contemporary residential buildings, meant to replace the old facades of

Tarlabaşı as a part of an upcoming plan on urban regeneration in Istanbul. The video problematizes forced displacement and gentrification process that the local migrant communities inevitably suffer from due to profitable economic activities and concentration of wealth among the rich segments of the society. In this sense, it also reflects on the widening gap between elite groups and marginalised populations, which Saskia Sassen has recognized as one of the symptoms of the global city³⁵⁵ – a definition which contemporary Istanbul complies with.

Melis Coker's remix is a conceptual answer and a counter-reaction to the official promotional video for the Tarlabaşı Renewal Project, circulated by the local authorities. The promotional clip opens with Tarlabaşı's empty streets, ruined buildings and derelict spaces. No residents or members of the local communities are portrayed. Correspondingly, a voiceover enforces the bleak atmosphere: "How do you know Tarlabaşı? Is it lonely, abandoned and isolated from life? Is it dark, dangerous and even devoid of any future? Whoever sees Tarlabaşı as the stepchild of the city is not wrong."³⁵⁶ The twist comes with 3D architectural rendering model, representing a sterile brand new version of the neighbourhood with polished buildings and empty, absent of human presence clean streets. The voiceover, however, advocates that Tarlabaşı Renewal Project revamps not only buildings and streets – "This large-scale-human-oriented change is transforming the present and the future of the people of Tarlabaşı. Desperation turns into elegance, loss turns into gain, and anxiety turns into trust in the neighbourhood."³⁵⁷ Gokce Su Yogurtcuoglu from MODE Istanbul argues that this advertisement (and media campaign) is a misrepresentation of the diverse migrant communities living in Tarlabaşı and other neighbourhoods destined to urban renewal (such as Sulukule, Küçükbakkalköy, Gülsuyu, Ayazma and many more). In general, the people who inhabit the transformation areas across Istanbul are marginalised and live in poverty without social security. The neighbourhoods are labelled as problematic and lawless, thus they "become stigmatised, stained, and dehumanised; and are therefore slated to be cleaned up – and cleaned of humans."³⁵⁸ Simultaneously, mainstream media depicts migrants as criminals by persistently covering crime-related stories in the corresponding areas, which is the only visibility

³⁵⁵ See also Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³⁵⁶ Gokce Su Yogurtcuoglu, "Introduction (TR)" in *Remixing Europe*. (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 106.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 105.

that migrants receive within society. Thus, mass media discourses legitimize gentrification processes and alienate migrants who live in the contested locations from the rest of the society.³⁵⁹ Moreover, Nese Erdilek from Istanbul Bilgi University Migration Research Centre (CMR)³⁶⁰ considers that Tarlabası Renewal Project has been assessed and designed as “a project without humans.” Erdilek points out that “these so-called regeneration projects, involving solely physical renewal, are impersonal projects, lacking any social content. People are alienated from society by illegality, illegitimacy, marginality, and ethnic identity, prejudices that are mainly shaped by the media.”³⁶¹

In this context, Melis Coker’s remix confronts the impersonal and dehumanized outlook of Tarlabası, which the urban renewal project foresees. In contrast, Coker represents the neighbourhood as a transcultural space of interpersonal and social interaction – conveyed by archival footage and photographs of collective activities, such as singing and salon dancing. The nostalgic return to Tarlabası’s history of multiethnic co-existence between Armenian, Greek and Jewish communities triggers the socio-spatial imagination of the viewers. Thus, within Melis Coker’s video Tarlabası emerges as a *real-and-imagined*³⁶² space of cross-cultural understanding. By re-imagining the neighbourhood as an idealised space of transcultural existence, Melis Coker expresses her symbolic protest and resistance towards the actual state of the place.

Istanbul’s urban regeneration has been also harshly criticised by the songs and the lyrics of the young hip-hop group *Tahribad-ı İsyân/Destruction Following Revolt*. Their music has become particularly topical and evocative during the protests at Istanbul’s Taksim Square against the replacement of Gezi Park with a shopping mall and high end residences in June 2013. *Tahribad-ı İsyân*’s song *Wonderland* (2013) expresses anger, frustration and the rebellion of the rappers to the renewal of their neighbourhood – Sulukule, which has been historically occupied by internal migrants and Roma communities. Several months before the Gezi events, in February 2013 the contemporary Turkish artist Halil Altindere (who works with video, sculpture, photography, installation and performance) created a video art piece featuring *Tahribad-ı İsyân*’s song *Wonderland*. In 2015 the video was acquisitioned by MoMA

³⁵⁹ Gokce Su Yogurtcuoglu implies the legitimization of gentrification processes in Istanbul by referring to Imre Azem’s critique in the case of Ayazma neighbourhood.

³⁶⁰ Nese Erdilek is the director of Bilgi University CMR, which is the first migration research centre in Turkey to conduct large-scale and multi-dimensional research on migration.

³⁶¹ Nese Erdilek, “Turkey and Internal Migration” in *Remixing Europe*. (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 124.

³⁶² In reference to Edward Soja’s conception, discussed in the first chapter.

(Museum of Modern Art) in New York and initially was presented at the 13th Istanbul Biennial, which also focused on contested public urban places in Istanbul.



Fig. 38. Melis Coker, *How Do You Know Tarlabası/ Tarlabası'ni Nasıl Bilirsiniz?* (2013, 5 min 21 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/68775220>

The Silent Excursion 89/Sessiz Gezi 89 (2013, 5 min 48 sec) problematizes even further the topic of forced migration by taking into scope the processes of compulsory assimilation that Bulgarian Turks have undergone during the Communist regime. In 1984 under Todor Zhivkov's rule (head of state of the People's Republic of Bulgaria from 1945 to 1989) the government policy of 'Bulgarisation' (also known as the "regeneration process") required the Turkish minority to change their original names from Turkish and Arabic into sonically similar Bulgarian ones (e.g. Hassan becoming Asen). The reasoning for enforcing such discriminatory procedure was the argument that during its 500 years of rule the Ottoman Empire had forced Bulgarians to convert to Islam. The alternative was migration to Turkey. Around three hundred thousand Bulgarian nationals with Turkish heritage left for Turkey in the late 1980's – the events which the *The Silent Excursion 89* retells. After the collapse of Communism in Bulgaria, Turkish minorities were free to revert to their original names or use both Arabic and Slavic ones. The movie studies the question of (cultural) identity beyond the restrictions of the nation state. Its visual language mixes archival footage, such as TV reportages, news media and fiction films representing the events. An interview with a female migrant uncovers her unwillingness to follow the steps of someone else's life and being anonymous under someone else's name, and rather prefers to immigrate. Footage of train stations crowded with families leaving Bulgaria is followed by images of camps at the Bulgarian-Turkish border. Stock footage of video noise screen reappears as a leitmotif and suggests a process of over-recording VHS tapes – a metaphor for

over-writing one's identity with a novel name. The piece closes with a fading away audio documentation of an interview with Zhivkov, who expresses no regret and realization for implementing a policy of obligatory assimilation. The remix was conducted by Enes Uysal who is an American literature graduate interested in interdisciplinary arts.



Fig. 39. *The Silent Excursion 89/Sessiz Gezi 89* (2013, 5 min 48 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/69631796>

In a caveat, it should be mentioned that *The Silent Excursion 89* can be thematically related and interpreted in a broader context of films, produced on the other side of the border – in Bulgaria, which aim to reconcile with the historical facts and present a cathartic perspective on the ‘Bulgarisation’ policy of forced assimilation. For instance, *Stolen Eyes* (2005) by Radoslav Spasov tells the story of inexplicable and impossible love between Ayten (a Muslim Turkish schoolteacher) and Ivan (a non-Muslim Bulgarian officer responsible for the new identity documents of the assimilated Turks). The movie represents human perspectives and the painful reality of the “regeneration process” in the 1980’s. It employs the trope of cross-cultural love, which has emerged as a typical transcultural repertoire, in order to negotiate cultural difference and create a third space between both ethnicities.

In a similar direction, without exclusively focusing on the ‘Bulgarisation’ process, *Eastern Plays* (2009) by Kamen Kalev represents the contemporary love story between Christo/Itso (a young Bulgarian artist)³⁶³ and Isil (a beautiful Turkish girl), whose family Itso saves from a neo-Nazi violent attack. The film opens with an ethnic joke between Christo’s brother and his neo-Nazi compatriot: “Do you know why there

³⁶³ Itso is the short nickname for the Bulgarian name Hristo or Christo (not to be confused with the Bulgaria-born artist Christo, well-known for environmental art projects with his late wife Jean-Claude). The main personage Christo Christov (Itso) was a non-professional actor, a young artist who in the film plays his real self. *Eastern Plays* is a post-mortem dedication to him.

are no Arabs on ‘Star Trek’?...Well, it’s because, it takes place in the future.” Thus, Kalev focuses on the emergence of right-wing and neo-Nazi movements in Bulgaria, which endorse ethnic intolerance and anti-Turkish sentiments as a justified counter-action to Bulgaria’s 500-year slavery under Ottoman rule. Kalev’s artistic resolution between historical facts and contemporary social dynamics of ethnic discrimination also employs the transcultural repertoire of cross-cultural romance. The platonic love between Itso and Isil is conveyed by cross-lingual silence and casual linguistic miscomprehensions in English (that both characters use to communicate), which also signify a process of transculturation.

As a recent critique on Wolfgang Welsch’s definition of transculturality points out, among the abstractions used by him the ones missing are the terms “‘sex’, ‘love’, ‘friendship’, ‘function’ and ‘ideology’ which are in fact subversive forces of integration because they ignore cultural borderlines.”³⁶⁴ It is difficult to measure whether the experiential dimensions of these notions guarantee transformation of one’s identity *per se*, however, the transcultural potential of the *third spaces* that they constitute can be easily recognized. A range of the already discussed creative remixes, and specifically the ones intertwining personal narratives and biographical elements, emphasize further that cross-cultural understanding in European societies could be achieved via experiential and dialogical processes of interpersonal interaction. Thus, artists and media makers employ creatively the *third spaces* of cross-cultural encounters, romance and friendship as transcultural repertoires, which signify the emergence of mutual understanding and integration in a cross-cultural order.



Fig. 40. *Eastern Plays* (Kamen Kalev, 2009, Bulgaria /Sweden), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1426361/>

³⁶⁴ Hans Ulrich Seeber, “Transculturality and Comedy in Zadie Smith’s Serio-comic Novel *White Theet* (2002).” in *From Interculturalism to Transculturalism. Mediating Encounters in Cosmopolitan Contexts*, (eds. Heinz Antor, Matthias Merkl, Klaus Stierstorfer and Lorenz Volkmann). (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter GmbH, 2010), 101-119, 103.

5.2.4 Remapping Europe atelier – UK

5.2.4.1 UK – history of migration

In the aftermath of WWII United Kingdom became a country of immigration. The post-war substantial labour shortages (just like in other European countries) were filled by colonial workers via immigration channels created by the country's citizenship law. Initially the post-war government aimed to take on migrant workers from within Europe (for instance via the European Volunteer Workers scheme) and to recruit migrants from its colonies to a limited extent (especially for the newly founded National Health Service). Contrary to other European countries, the UK did not establish large-scale "guest worker" programmes to recruit from overseas. During the 1950's and 1960's most immigration developed spontaneously – migrants from the Caribbean, South Asia, and parts of Africa started to influx to the imperial 'motherland'. In 1951, the ethnic minority population was estimated at about fifty thousand people. Both Labour and Conservative post-war governments initiated discussions on legislation to restrict the unwanted migration flow. Initially legislation was not introduced due to attempts to not alienate recently independent countries, especially at a moment when the UK's formal empire was meant to be replaced by an informal sphere of influence through the Commonwealth. At the same time, the 1948 British Nationality Act had established a broad citizenship category by extending resident rights to all colonial subjects – known as the Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC). In the following years between 1960's and 1970's, however, immigration legislation with a restrictive intent was issued, specifically aimed at restricting the flows of Asian and African and Caribbean colonial immigrants, as opposed to Irish or other white immigrants. During the 1970's and 1980's migrant flows lessened and were composed mainly of family immigrants. The 1981 British Nationality Act revised the 1948 legislation and characterized British citizenship in a narrow, post-imperial way. Moreover, visa regimes were and carrier sanctions were introduced in order to limit asylum-seeking migration. After the election of the Labour government in 1997 new changes were introduced. 'Managed migration' as economic migration was labelled was encouraged after 2001 and access to the UK labour market for foreign nationals was liberalised. The newly introduced Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) brought 17,631 economic migrants in 2005 and the number of approved work permit holders enlarged from 62,975 in 1997 to 137,035 in 2005. The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme

(SAWS) attracted 15,455 persons and the newly established Sector Based Scheme employed 7,401 persons. The government's decision to open the labour market directly without transition period to the new member states who joined the EU in 2004 brought 579,000 EU citizens to the UK, sixty-five percent of whom were Polish.³⁶⁵ Overall, the foreign-born population in the UK increased from 3.8 million to around 8.3 million and the number of foreign citizens increased from nearly 2 million to more than 5 million between 1993 and 2014. The most common country of birth among the foreign-born is India, but most of the foreign citizens in the UK come from Poland. Among all regions with comparable data in the UK London has the greatest number of migrants including three million foreign-born people in 2014.³⁶⁶ In terms of asylum control, while not being a member of the Schengen free movement area and has the right to opt-out from migration policies, UK has participated in most of the EU's restrictive asylum measures. For instance, the Dublin system requires asylum seekers to lodge a claim in the first European country they enter, which puts pressure on UK's external border regimes to the south and the east.

The novel context after the Brexit vote will certainly impose new migration patterns. Among the possible trends, analyzers expect a spike in immigration as EU nationals could try to secure their status before change of policies. Second, predictions foresee a major increase in irregular migration once the new rules are in place, if previously legal workers from Europe would require work. This irregular migration will be mostly related to possible so-called visa over-stayers in the future system. Next, it could be expected that less younger workers and less workers with low qualifications would immigrate to the UK. Finally, it is difficult to predict whether immigrant flows will decrease, as expected and desired by the Leave voters. While a potential UK economic decline could occur and most EU nationals are economic migrants, it could be still expected that the United Kingdom would continue to receive at least five hundred thousand immigrants per year, from EU and non-EU states. Border control represents another complex problem after the referendum, including border controls in Calais where UK officials are allowed to check identity documents already in France. Moreover, the agreements on movement between Gibraltar and Spain and the Common

³⁶⁵ See also Netzwerk Migration in Europa e.V. "Immigratin Policy in the United Kingdom" in *Migration, Citizenship, Education* (online) <http://migrationeducation.de/49.0.html>

³⁶⁶ The Migration Observatory, Cinzia Reinzo and Carlos Vargas-Silva, *Migrant in the UK: An Overview 2016* (online) http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Migrants%20in%20the%20UK-Overview_0.pdf

Travel Area between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom are also under question.³⁶⁷ While immigration legislation and border control remain issues under discussion, the Brexit campaign has triggered critical reflections on the role of mainstream media in framing negative discourses on integration and immigration in the UK.

5.2.4.2 UK – mainstream media discourse on migration

UK has a long history of mass media (re)produced discourses promoting discrimination against migrants and ethnic minority groups. Public polls on immigration indicate scepticism, while the subject of immigration itself has emerged as a recurring pattern of political struggles, general election and communication campaigns.

Sarita Malik follows the history of immigration reporting and therefore explores the genealogy of dominant discourses on migration. The anti-immigration government legislation and the neo-conservative populism, which started to emerge in the late 1950's triggered the production of a sanctioned "official racism". In 1978 the soon-to-be elected Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher proclaimed the danger of being "swamped by alien cultures." Documentary programmes from the 1960's and the 1970's, such as BBC's *Race – A question of Numbers?* and *Great Debate: The Question of Immigration*, were dominated by fear from black and Asian presence in the UK. Departing from here, it can be followed how mass media have racialised the concept of "illegal" immigration. "'Racialisation' is a representation (as well as political and ideological) process in which the individual, group or cultural product becomes defined as 'other'. This has real social effects,"³⁶⁸ as Malik considers. Malik's argument is supported by a recent publication by the Glasgow Media Group, *Bad News for Refugees*, which proves that racialising media discourse on migration has consequences not only for citizens' political action, but also for the experiences of refugees and migrant communities. Similarly, a study conducted by Migration Observatory at Oxford University from 2013 shows a wide circulation of prejudicial language and prevailing associations between the notions of immigration and illegality:

³⁶⁷ See also Migration Policy Institute. *Will Somerville, When the Dust Settles: Migration Policy after Brexit* (online) <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/when-dust-settles-migration-policy-after-brexit>

³⁶⁸ Sarita Malik, "What the "go home" campaign tell us about the British media" in *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 55.

[T]here is a dominance of images of “black gun crime”, the “clash of civilizations”, and most of all, “the war on terror”, producing new concerns around segregation, cultural difference and especially security [...] national television has failed to deliver meaningful and culturally “in touch” representation for minority groups and displayed a particular fascination with certain kinds of topics and themes – asylum, difference, urban strife and migration.”³⁶⁹

What Sarita Malik recognizes as a more inclusive ethnic minority representation in common everyday media ranges from newsreaders to soap opera characters, reality TV and lifestyle shows that reflect UK social, cultural and ethnic diversity.

A striking example of discriminative discursive practices related to migration was set by the “Go Home” UK Home Office campaign launched in July 2013. Operation Vaken was a trial campaign aimed at convincing the ones living illegally in the UK to “go home” voluntarily, supported by the government. Advertising vans were circulated across six London boroughs. Each one was carrying a billboard with the slogan “In the UK illegally? Go home or face arrest. Text Home to 78070 for free advice and help with travel documents”, and a text box indicating the number of arrests in the corresponding area. Simultaneously, the UK Home Office created the Twitter hashtag #immigrationoffenders and started to tweet images of the arrested migrants.

Matt Cuzner recognizes that the notion of ‘home’ has been always embedded in racialised discourses in the UK. For instance, in 1964 the Conservative Party ran a poster campaign with the motto “If you desire a coloured for your neighbour vote Labour, if you are already burdened with one, vote Tory”. Meanwhile, the racist National Front have regularly used “go home” as a slogan. In this sense, Cuzner considers that campaigns such as the “go home” one use “age-old tropes about migrants and deploy them as a political tool, manipulating the imagery around migration for political ends, racialising and criminalising migration.”³⁷⁰ Moreover, he argues that for many the “go home” instruction was offensive and hurtful, especially for certain asylum seekers who have lost sense of security, since their homes no longer exist. The Operation Vaken provoked wide public criticism and social media lampoons and counter-reactions – twenty-seven thousand people engaged in sharing the counter-hashtag #RacistVan and the tagline “Stop the Racist Van! #RacistVan if you see it” as an expression of social protest.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Matt Cuzner, “Introduction (UK)” in *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 48-9.

³⁷¹ Ibid. 47

While social media platforms could contribute to the distribution of alternative narratives and representations of migrants, they often only function as additional communication channels for the reproduction of discrimination and discursive racism. With this regard, the problem that Ahmed Sheikh recognizes is that “the very emotive language used in the media such as “illegal aliens”/”asylum seekers”/”undocumented”/”over-stayer”/”go home” creates a false sense of crisis, which exacerbates the Us against Them feeling.”³⁷²

In a similar context, in 2013 the British government considered to launch a negative advertising campaign, which would focus on the downsides of British life such as scarce jobs and rainy weather in order to prevent potential migration from Bulgaria and Romania in 2014 when the labour market was opened for both countries after seven years of transition. The so-called “you want like it here” campaign would contradict EU’s fundamental principle of lifting working restrictions maximum after seven years of EU membership. It has also stirred intense debates on the stigmatization of EU citizens from Eastern Europe as necessarily low-skilled workers or social benefits-tourists. Strong anti-Eastern European sentiments have been among the central motives of the Brexit campaign (as immigration listed as the second reason because of which voters opted to leave the EU). Thus, intra-European migration, especially from Eastern Europe has triggered the emergence of biased discourses and bigotry. Mass media representations on migration within the context of the UK referendum signalled not only destabilization of EU’s solidarity principles, but also a collapse of Europe’s humanitarian values. The Syrian refugee crisis is also a focal point of British Euroscepticism and mainstream media hate speech against migrants. While the refugee crisis has materialised in loss of empathy in British and overall European societies, creative initiatives and artistic endeavours across Europe have been trying to reverse mass media (re)production of Europe’s loss of humanity. With this regard, the upcoming section will explore creative and remix practice that artists and media makers have employed in the UK (since 1980’s and 1990’s Black British cinema) in order to generate forms of self-representation and subvert mainstream discourses on migration.

³⁷² Ahmed Sheikh, “You Are Rich because I Am Poor” in *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 50-1.

5.2.4.3 UK – *Remapping Europe media remixes*

The UK atelier of *Remapping Europe* was developed in a close collaboration with British Film Institute (BFI) – Future Film programme for Doc Next Network and Refugee Youth, which is a network of youth groups working together across London. As an organization, Refugee Youth uses participatory action research and creativity to combat isolation and alienation amongst young refugees in London and build inclusive community. Twenty-five young people for whom Refugee Youth is a safe space for meetings and acquiring new (artistic) skills have taken part in *Remapping Europe*. The weekly sessions were organized in the course of two months in the form of conversations on personal experiences of moving to the UK. Central topics of discussion and remix creation were how to overcome stereotypical perceptions of migration, combat media representations of migrants and refugees, and comprehend multiple layers of one's cultural identity.³⁷³

From a broader perspective it can be observed, that remix (especially as a method of sampling archival image and footage) has become inseparable component of documentary film aesthetics. In this sense, the aesthetic modalities of sampling repertoires or existing media content and *encoding-decoding-encoding* new meanings coincide with each other. The juxtaposition of existing content generates new connotations and functions as a *trans-coding* practice of subverting negative stereotypes and cultural prejudices. From a different disciplinary stance, Dagmar Brunow has argues that nonconventional documentary filmmaking and the film essay genre, as remediation of archival material, also play an important role in the construction of cultural memory.³⁷⁴

With this regard, (and in the context of creative approaches from the UK), should be mentioned the films of Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC)³⁷⁵ and Sankofa Film and Video Collective³⁷⁶, founded in the 1980's as a form of artistic resistance against Thatcherism and the socio-political settings in Great Britain. Both collectives were established by Black British and diaspora filmmakers and multimedia artists,

³⁷³ See also Matthew Cuzner, *Remapping Europe. Films and Performances* (European Cultural Foundation, 2014), 99.

³⁷⁴ Dagmar Brunow, *Remediating Transcultural Memory*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015).

³⁷⁵ BAFC was founded in 1982 and was active until 1998, including John Akomfrah, Lina Gopaul, Avril Johnson, Reece Auguiste, Trevor Mathison, Edward George and Claire Joseph, replaced by David Lawson in 1985.

³⁷⁶ Sankofa's members Isaac Julien, Martina Attille, Maureen Blackwood, Nadine Marsh-Edwards and Robert Crusz established the collective in 1983.

whose thematic scope developed around Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha's social theories on post-colonialism and multicultural British society.³⁷⁷ Thus, their films deal with questions of identity and diversity, historical backgrounds of colonialism, anti-racial attitudes and construction of cultural Otherness, and the personal experiences of Black and Asian (in the case of Sankofa) migrants in British social reality.

Specifically, BAFC experimental aesthetics can be defined by the constitution of a poetic, elusive and intensely provocative filmic space, where multiple references and media textures are sampled in order to transcend cultural, ethnic, social and political boundaries. John Akomfrah's film essay *Handsworth Songs* (1986), celebrated as BAFC's most emblematic piece, expresses Akomfrah's philosophy of montage and remixing image (newsreels, filmed footage, still photos) and immersive polysonic soundtrack into a multi-layered narrative composition. Through this method of sampling diverse mediums and contents, the film creates a multifaceted exploration of 1985 riots in Birmingham and London. The civil disturbances in Birmingham's district Handsworth and in several urban centres in London came as violent and tragic events, which triggered generalised and demonised British media depictions of Black presence in the UK. In contrast, *Handsworth Songs* represents a multiplicity of voices, which deconstructs mass media discourses on Black (un)belonging and opens the potential for various personal interpretations.

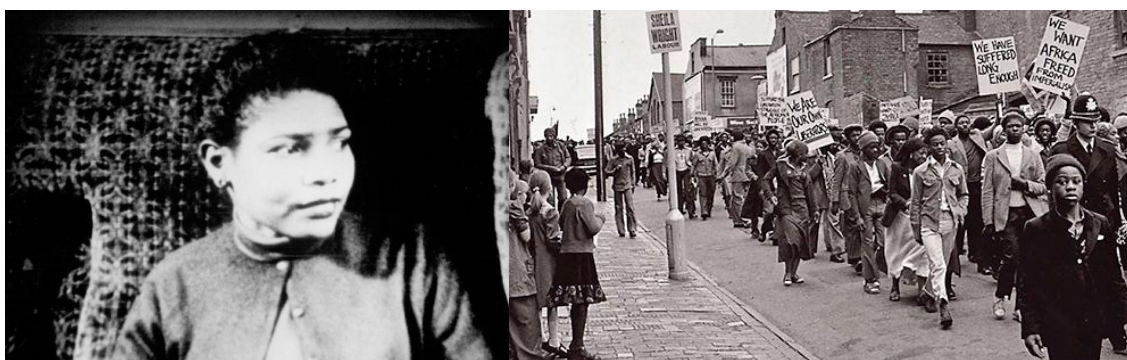


Fig. 41. John Akomfrah, *Handsworth Songs* (61 mins., 1986) www.bfi.org.uk

The critical and creative praxis developed by BAFC re-emerges as a relevant artistic device for deconstructing today's socio-political dynamics and the reproduction of discursive racism across Europe and in the UK. From a media-art historical

³⁷⁷ BAFC founder John Akomfrah also authored the film *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013) and the multi-layered media art installation *The Unfinished Conversation* (2013) dedicated to Hall.

perspective, it can be also observed that the collective's creative approach has informed the conceptual and methodological framework of the overall *Remapping Europe – Remix project* initiative, and the video remixes produced at the UK atelier. Although their aesthetic language is much more 'modest' in terms of intermediality and intertextual exchange, it still repeats the very same *cut'n'mix* (in Dick Hebdige's rhetoric) praxis of resemantising existing (archival) content. This critical and creative gesture generates new connotation and consequently triggers the emergence of alternative discourses.

Helping Others (2013, 5 min 38 sec) by Adhurim Demiraj (Albania) is a remix which explores people's (un)willingness to help each other and develop interpersonal empathy. The video appropriates a vintage class-room video instructing pupils how not to communicate with strangers. It also interviews random passersby across Euston train station in London, questioned about the last time they had helped or had been helped by a stranger. The mentioned little everyday gestures of assisting a person to cross the street, transport a suitcase, show directions and so on are presented as a voiceover layer next to the footage of the crowded station. The amateur feel of the remix contributes to its true-to-life scenario. Adhurim Demiraj moved to London in 2012 in order to study English at Croydon College. His idea for this piece was born from personal impressions on the multiplicity of people in London who traverse common urban spaces, but express indifference and unwillingness to mutually connect and help each other. Adhurim Demiraj's remix can be understood as a personal critique on UK society's loss of empathy, which contradicts Europe's fundamental humanitarian values. It also constructs a mosaic of media references in order to suggest the potential emergence of a third space of cross-cultural understanding between self and cultural others.

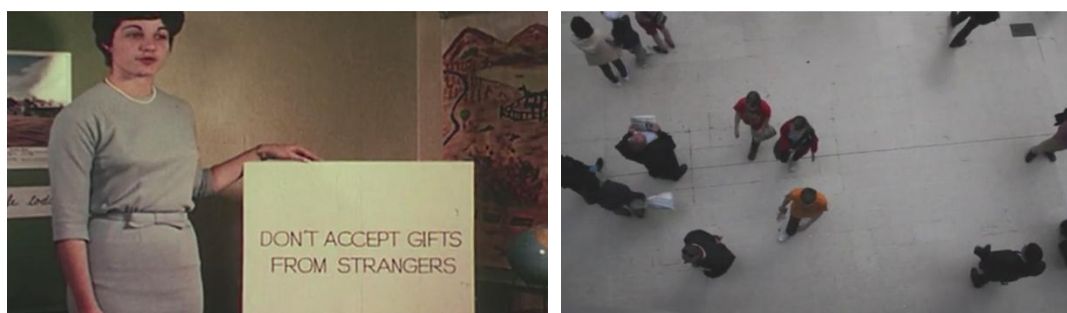


Fig. 42. Adhurim Demiraj, *Helping Others* (2013, 5 min 38 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/69557621>

On a similar note, *First Steps (Sorry + Please)* (2013, 2 min 58 sec) by Cedoux Kadima, who has a degree in Fine Arts and is interested in photography and film-making, explores the interpersonal dynamics of empathy, trust, hope and integration. Upon arrival from his native Congo to the UK in 2011, Cedoux used to be familiar only with the English words “Sorry” and “Please.” Thus, he had to cope and navigate through London by picking up singular phrases. *First Steps* reinvents this initial experience in the UK by depicting Cedoux strolling down the South Bank of the Thames and occasionally approaching pedestrians in attempts to establish a personal contact by counting solely on these two expressions. His video walk is accompanied by a subjective reflection in French on the challenges of integration.

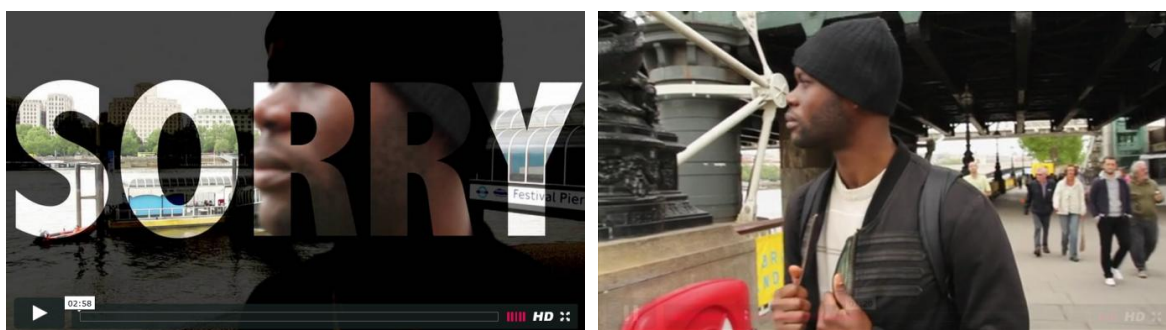


Fig. 43. Cedoux Kadima, *First Steps (Sorry + Please)* (2013, 2 min 58 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/68384933>

It can be noted that *First Steps (Sorry + Please)* to a certain extent ‘recycles’ the conceptual and structural framework of an early cinematic reflection on refugee existence in London – *Refuge England* (1959) directed by the Hungarian filmmaker Robert Vas, known as one of UK’s foremost documentary practitioners³⁷⁸. *Refuge England* shows the first day of arrival of a Hungarian migrant, who traverses London in between Waterloo Station and West End, wanders around unfamiliar streets and suburbs, and approaches indifferent strangers in attempt to discover the incomplete address on a post-card he carries around. His impressions, hopes and despair are portrayed via an inner monologue, while the only word that he knows in English is “refugee.” The film retells Vas’ personal experience of migrating to England as a refugee after the Hungarian uprising in 1956. Through the repertoire of the *flâneur* (the

³⁷⁸ Rober Vas (1931 – 1978) is known for his BBC documentaries *The Golden Years of Alexander Korda* (1968), *Heart of Britain* (1970), *The Issue Should be Avoided* (1971), *My Homeland* (1976), *Joseph Stalin* (1973) and *Nine Days in '26* (1974). *Refuge England* was released with the support of BFI Experimental Film Fund and it follows the style of the Free Cinema movement – low-budget, usually black and white, documentaries focusing on the life of ordinary middle-class working people.

stroller) Vas' protagonist (and alter ego) acts as a critical observer, who reflects on the estrangement one encounters while adapting to a new cultural context.

From a sociological stance, Zygmunt Bauman understands the emblematic for modernity image of the *flâneur* as the prototype of postmodern identity construction. The *flâneur* has emerged as the central symbolic figure of modern urban life since Walter Benjamin's cultural analysis. Benjamin draws upon Charles Baudelaire's poetry and conception of the *flâneur* in order to explore the role of the urban observer/the stroller both as an analytical method and an urban phenomenon (a product of the Industrial Revolution). According to Bauman, however, the formation of modern identity can be better articulated through the metaphor of *the pilgrim*, which entails travelling with a mission towards a predetermined final destination. Rather, *the stroller*, *the vagabond*, *the tourist*, and *the player* collectively describe the postmodern condition of fragmented identity, which resembles an open-ended journey with unknown point of arrival. As Bauman considers, "if the *modern* 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the *postmodern* 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open."³⁷⁹ Within Bauman's hermeneutic sociology *the tourists* travel by wish and freedom of choice in a global world which is irresistibly attractive. *The vagabonds*, on the contrary, travel because they have "no other bearable choice" and "find the world within their (local) reach unbearably *inhospitable*."³⁸⁰ According to Bauman, globalization is geared to *the tourists'* dreams and desires, which unavoidably, transforms many others into *vagabonds*. The human consequences of globalization entail that for the first category (global businesses, managers and elites) state borders are levelled down. For the latter (homeless, refugees, asylum seekers), however, "the walls built of immigration controls, of residence laws and of 'clean streets' and 'zero tolerance' policies, grow taller."³⁸¹ Thus, it can be considered that Cedoux Kadima's video *First Steps (Sorry + Please)*, as a conceptual 're-make' of Robert Vas' *Refuge England*, also problematizes the subjective experiences and perceptions of those who are inevitably rendered as *vagabonds*.

³⁷⁹ Zygmunt Bauman, "From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 18.

³⁸⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, "Tourists and Vagabonds" in *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 92-93.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

From a film studies angle, it should be considered that the cinematic representation of the (im)migrant stroller has emerged as a recurring repertoire in transcultural film. In this context, could be mentioned the Parisian *migrant flâneurs* in *Bande de filles/Girlhood* (Céline Sciamma, 2014), *Eden à l'ouest/Eden is West* (Costa-Gavras, 2009), *La haine/Hate* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995). The given examples are among a larger range of cinematic narratives, which exploit episodes of positioning their protagonists within the socio-cultural rhythm of European cityscapes, public places, crowds and streets. The motif of wandering within (unfamiliar) urban spaces and being both out and inside the crowd (the *flâneur's* duality recognized by Benjamin) metaphorically represents the *third space* (Bhabha) or the *contact zone* (in Mary Louise Pratt's terms) of potential transculturation between 'cultural Others' and the host society. The state of in-betweenness that the *flâneur* embodies, as being both within (as a participant) and outside (as an observer) of the city dynamics, corresponds to the liminal, intermediate, *third space* of transculturation where cultural differences are negotiated.

The ambivalent entity of the *flâneur* on film has been further conceptualised by Rob Stone in a recent study on cinematic pilgrimage, as a subjectively induced alternative to organized film tourism. According to Stone:

Flânerie has informed many films about those who transcend the potential banality of their existence via the affinities they find in ephemeral associations. It can serve as an assertion of subjectivity, often opposing the hegemonic idea of a city with a view of it from the perspective of an Other [...] The *flâneur's* accumulation of experiences and influences often results in an indistinct outcast figure, one who walks to a different rhythm, defined and maintained by an absence of clear origins and a lack of explicit direction. Consequently, the *flâneur* can be disruptive where a sense of rootlessness and rejection of settlement renders the figure as threatening Other.³⁸²

If Rob Stone's observation is translated into the ambit of immigrant and transcultural cinema, it could be used for understanding the image of the *migrant flâneur* as a trope, which evokes the ambiguity, the uncertainty, the fluidity of the experiential and spatial construction of cultural Otherness. In this sense, the repertoire of the *migrant flâneur* is used by filmmakers as a discursive critical strategy. It both represents the perspectives of cultural Others and also potentially disrupts and trans-

³⁸² Rob Stone, "The Flâneur on Film: On films by Richard Linklater and others" in *Film Studies for Free* blog, 10 Feb 2014 (online) <http://filmstudiesforfree.blogspot.bg/2014/02/the-flaneur-on-film-on-films-by-richard.html>

codes audiences' established socio-spatial and toponilic imagination. For instance, while Woody Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008) celebrates the hedonistic aura of the city, Alejandro Gonzales Iñárritu's *Biutiful* (2010) renders Barcelona as a bleak and inhospitable to immigrants locus. Whereas Allen's candid film tourism agenda accommodates the worldview of *the tourists*, Iñárritu's take on the social reality of *the vagabonds*, has a critical and transformative function.



Fig. 44. Robert Vas, *Refuge England* (16mm, black and white, 27 mins, 1959)
<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/439053/>

Limbo (2013, 2 min 5 sec) by Hamid Reza Rajaby also addresses the topic of being a stranger in a novel cultural context. Hamid studies Engineering in the UK and collaborates as a Young Advisor in *What is Justice* project, which advocates for fair justice for children and youths. His short is a personal reflection on the insecurities of immigrants' existence, the enduring process of asylum application and the impossibility to plan for the future, since living in a limbo means being unsure where that future would be.

The senses of uncertainty and stagnation, which Hamid's video explores, have been also addressed by other Refugee Youth members within the publication *Becoming a Londoner: Our Creative Campaign* (2009). The participants' views underline the difficulties of being accepted as equal members of UK's society due to the context of their lives. Especially for young people, who arrive in the UK alone without their families, asylum policies can have a devastating effect on their lives. A number of young people live in a state of limbo for years, expecting decisions on cases, while very few obtain a refugee status before becoming eighteen years old. As some of the *Becoming a Londoner* participants share, "for many of us the prospect of turning 18 is

full of fear rather than excitement. Quite simply some of us in this country are scared to grow up. The 3 “Ds” – dispersal, detention and deportation, are all frightening prospects.”³⁸³



Fig. 45. Hamid Reza Rajaby, *Limbo* (2013, 2 min 5 sec)
<https://vimeo.com/docnextnetwork/remapping-europe/video/68384935>

Limbo critically renders the problems of asylum application via a mixture of visual and audio textures. The remix combines archival footage with stop-motion animated captions, which bring a second layer of critique along with the voiceover recording of Hamid Reza Rajaby’s outspoken thoughts. To a certain extent, the video’s graphic and discursive application of text and slogans resonates with the creative approach of the visual artist Keith Piper. The use of language and text has emerged as a recurring component in his (interactive) media artworks, which critically explore up-to-date manifestations of racial discrimination. Piper’s interactive work *Local/Stranger: Delete Where Appropriate* (2004) deconstructs racial categorizations and popular stereotypes of migrants. Similarly, his earlier work *Surveillances/Tagging the Other* (1991) counts on *cut’n’mix* aesthetics (via low-cost Amiga computer technology) in order to challenge racial classifications of ‘Black Britishness.’

³⁸³ Extracts from the Refugee Youth’s publication *Becoming a Londoner in Remixing Europe*. (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 69.

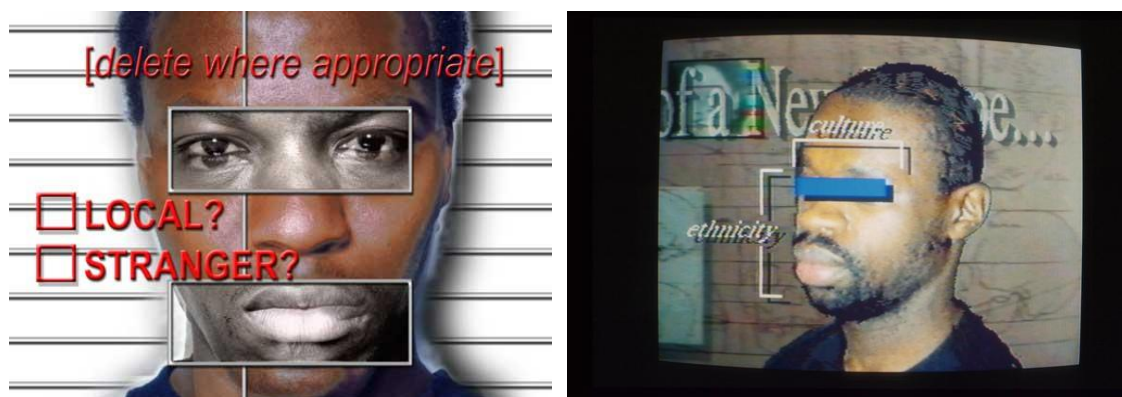


Fig. 46. Keith Piper, *Local/Stranger: Delete Where Appropriate* (2004)

http://www.virtualmigrants.com/term_f/flocst.htm (left)

Fig. 47. Keith Piper, *Surveillances/Tagging the Other* (1991) <http://www.keithpiper.info/statement.htm>

The various creative approaches and sampling techniques employed by the young media-makers in the five ateliers in Spain, Poland, Turkey and the UK re-appear within the sampling style of the collective *European Souvenirs*. Their live-cinema performances expand opportunities for critical and creative remixes of existing media content into an audio-visual spectacle, which resembles an immersive environment and triggers the generation of new meanings. The following sub-section will focus on the creative searches and media realizations, which define the work of the *European Souvenirs*.

5.3 European Souvenirs – live-cinema performance and remix

The artist collective *European Souvenirs* was established in 2012 on the initiative of the Doc Next Network, who was responsible for the conception of a transnational remix project. The group of artists is composed of Karol Rakowski (Poland), Baris Gursel (Turkey), Farah Rahman (the Netherlands), Maleventura (Spain) and Noriko Okaku (UK/Japan). Departing from the idea to develop an audio-visual show by appropriating and deconstructing existing media content from sound and visual archives and found footage, the artists began their collaboration within three residencies in Istanbul, Warsaw and Seville. Their creative sessions also involved representatives of the corresponding local arts and music scenes. Under the coordination of the experienced creative collective ZEMOS98, the *European Souvenirs* developed the aesthetic language of re-using, re-mixing and re-contextualizing media references, which became

their guiding principle for designing a performance on migration, media and imagery. As central thematic concerns emerged the topics of ‘borders,’ ‘home,’ ‘memory,’ which the artists initially explored within their own experiences of mobility inside and outside of Europe. The premiere of live-cinema performance took place at the cultural hub De Balie in Amsterdam in October 2012. The triggered interest among a variety of audiences resulted in extending the live-cinema performance into a touring format, which visited Bilbao, Seville, Geneva, Kosovo and Utrecht in 2012 and 2013. The success of this initial collaboration motivated the collective and Doc Next Network to work on a second audio-visual show under the title *Eurovisions*, which also integrated the artistic vibe and technical support of the renowned London art collective – *The Light Surgeons*.

Since its initiation in 1995 *The Light Surgeons* has emerged as collective of pioneering multimedia artists and recently as a media arts company who produce multi-screen site-specific installations, digital films, expanded cinema, motion graphics and audio-visual performances. The artistic approach of the group’s immersive live acts combines VJing (re-using documentary footage and diverse visual mediums) with electronic music compositions. In terms of thematic and conceptual dimensions, *The Light Surgeons*’ work deals with questions of belonging and cross-cultural fusion in global societies. For instance, a recent live-cinema performance by *The Light Surgeons* entitled *SuperEverything* (2013) explores the interconnections between race, identity, ritual and British colonial history in Malaysia. With this regard, *The Light Surgeons*’ aesthetic influence on the *European Souvenirs*’ work could be grasped within the media and conceptual realization of the live-cinema performance *Eurovisions*.



Fig. 48. *The Light Surgeons*, *SuperEverything* (live cinema performance, 2013)
<http://www.lightsurgeons.com/art/supereverything/>

Eurovisions which reflects on crossing EU borders, mass media representations of (im)migration in Europe and personal experiences of traversing European space, also resembles the aesthetic language of another British artist collective – *The Virtual Migrants*, founded by Kooj Chuhan in 1998. Their projects involve participatory, digital, online and interactive media, through which the artists share migrants' perceptions, advocate for social justice and promote anti-discrimination in UK's social context. Through crossing the boundary between artists and non-artists and involving communities, activists and theorists, *The Virtual Migrants* develop transdisciplinary projects that interlink issues of austerity, refugee rights and climate destruction. Among their projects are the live performances and travelling exhibitions *Continent Chop Chop* (2015), *Committed to Represent* (2013), *Refusing the Refused* (2013), *Centre Cannot Hold* (2009-2013), *Terminal Frontiers* (2002-2005). The *trans-coding* potential of sampling cultural repertoires and media content, as a critical and creative praxis explored in the experimental documentaries of Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC), reaches a further development within the works of *The Virtual Migrants*. For instance, Kooj Chuhan's interactive multimedia installation *Resonance* (1999) constructs a multilayered mosaic of collaged digital graphics, animations, computer games elements, documentary video and interviews with migrant settlers in the UK. By navigating through a variety of mediums and contents, audiences experience a multilayer understanding of the notions of alienation and integration.



Fig. 49. Kooj Chuhan, *Resonance* (interactive installation, 1999) <https://koojchuhan.wordpress.com/>

Similarly, the *Eurovisions* show aims at deconstructing dominant media discourses and stereotypes of migration in Europe by sampling newsreels, film archives, found footage, TV spots and broadcasted iconic moments from the song contest Eurovision (that the title of the live-cinema show mocks and re-appropriates in a critical

manner). As recurring visual motifs appear images of borders, fences, passport control, abstracted landscapes and fragments from personal narratives. The imagery and rituals of border control, *abu ali* (Toni Serra's pseudonym) argues, automatically validate the logics and practices of control:

The visual narratives of borders that confront us every day – in the design of maps and signs, and their representation in the media – strongly shape the imagery of migration. The border functions as a tool of control: both the physical border a migrant crosses, as well as the personal, mental borders that create notions of “home”, “otherness” or for that matter “Europeanness.”³⁸⁴

Thus, he suggests further that borders should be approached as an attitude, rather than a fixed line – an imaginatively produced shifting entity, which also produces its imaginary. Moreover, he questions if migrants cross borders or rather “move borders with them, taking them into the societies that they visit.”³⁸⁵ This perspective certainly resonates with Étienne Balibar's conceptualization of Europe as a borderland of overlapping peripheries with no ‘pure’ identity and shifting geopolitical and cultural frontiers.³⁸⁶

Correspondingly, the *Eurovisions* live cinema performance attempts to transcend borders and ‘re-map’ Europe by re-semanticizing imagery that represents Europe's migration control apparatus and technologies of surveillance and biopolitics. The sampling, the layering and the juxtaposition of various media specificities also performs a *trans-coding* function, which allows for the generation of novel relations between media contents and therefore new perceptions and meanings. The short video productions created within the *Remapping Europe* ateliers by young media-makers in Poland, Spain, UK and Turkey also serve as media referents, which have been remixed in simulacral continuity. The depicted dynamics of mobility, however, rather focuses on (illegal) immigration to the EU, while it lacks at portraying the multiple boundaries which delineate Fortress Europe also from within. The *Eurovisions* live-cinema performance was enacted on 20 May 2014 at EYE Film Museum and Institute in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. It was followed by a masterclass given by the artists on 22 May, which provided the opportunity to discuss the technical aspects of creating the performance.

³⁸⁴ abu ali (Tony Serra), “Migra Visions” in *Remixing Europe* (Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014), 75.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Étienne Balibar, “Europe as Borderland” in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* April 2009 27: 190-215.

As the *European Souvenirs* shared, *Eurovisions* which involves multi-screen projections and live music score, has been released via a combination of VJing and DJing softwares and remixing practices. The masterclass also opened debate on the conceptual and artistic dimensions of working on the topic of migration in Europe.

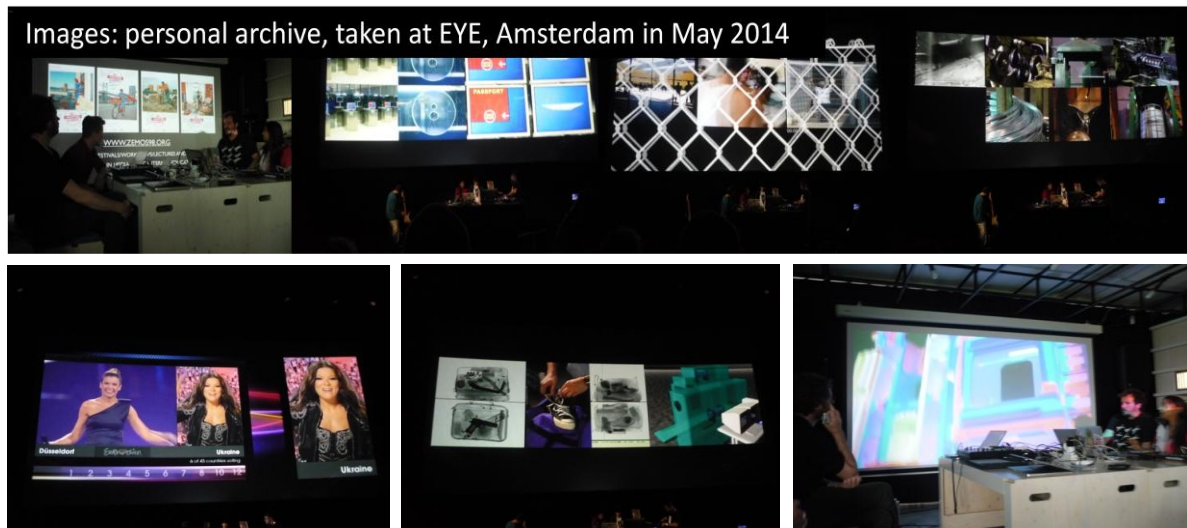


Fig. 50. European Souvenirs, *Eurovisions* (live cinema performance at EYE, Amsterdam, 2014) – personal archive

5.4 Conclusions: Europe's cultural map as a transcultural rhizome

The analysis of *Remapping Europe, a Remix Project* (2013) aimed at illustrating to what extent the creative process of remixing existing media content and repertoires in a cross-cultural order could be artistically employed as a form of critical and creative *trans-coding*, which could potentially trigger processes of transculturation. The media remixes produced within *Remapping Europe* employ sampling of cultural repertoires, *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle of active audience participation and representation of transculturality, as modalities of transcultural aesthetics in a complementary and non-exclusive order. Especially, the 'user-generated' remixes created at the five media ateliers in Seville, Warsaw, Lublin, Istanbul and London explicate how the aesthetic modalities of sampling repertoires or existing media content and *encoding-decoding-encoding* new meanings (also as a cycle of active audience participation) coincide with each other. Thus, in both cases the juxtaposition of existing content generates new

connotations and functions as a *trans-coding* practice of subverting negative stereotypes and cultural prejudices.

The discussed selected videos emphasize the creative use of remix and re-contextualization of archival footage in the construction of alternative (self-)representations of migration in Europe, which contrast with the mass media perspectives and prevailing discourses. A range of works employ parody and re-enactment of popular media genres (such as TV ads, YouTube tutorials), while others count on exclusively on personal narratives as forms of symbolic resistance. The remix atelier in Seville explore the themes of migration as an imaginary and actual state of existence, while the Polish media labs in Warsaw and Lublin focus on migration as a conscious choice, family and borderline stories. The workshops and videos from Turkey discuss internal migration and urban transformation. The output of the remix atelier in the UK centres on processes of cultural ‘othering,’ empathy and integration.

As central motifs emerge the themes of border crossing and control, home and belonging, transcultural identities and *third spaces* that project the need for cross-cultural co-existence in urban spaces and European societies as a whole. *Tránsito/Crossing* (David Gallardo, 6 min 9 sec, 2013) translates the topic of border crossing into an allegorical tale, which *trans-codes* the *dehumanizing trope* of immigrants’ animalisation by deliberately employing the subversive function of the mockumentary (or docucomedy) genre. The mixture of fictional and biographical elements functions as a symbolic transcendence of the borders which separate Self and cultural Others. *Dowód/Proof* (Alicja Plachówna-Vasilevska, 6 min 4 sec, 2013) explores the border through a satirical re-enactment of her husband’s immigration office exam. Images of passports, stamps and immigration forms that signify border control and the policing of intimate relations are remixed into a cut-outs animation, which represents the border as a living organism. Furthermore, *ABC PRZEMYTNIKA/A Smuggler’s ABC* (Magdalena Kuzar, 9 min 56 sec, 2013) subverts notions of border control, surveillance and illegality by offering a YouTube tutorial on smuggling goods across the Polish-Ukrainian border. By sampling two mutually exclusive semantic structures – illegal trafficking and social media exposure and performativity – the video emphasizes that subversive humour itself functions as a *trans-coding* mechanism, which can destabilize dominant discourses. In a similar approach, *Me Voy a Bailar Pegao/ I’m Going to Dance Pegao* (Ellavled Alcano, 5 min 52 sec, 2013) deconstructs Third World

stereotypes by re-contextualizing audio and moving image references into a teleshopping parody.

The Silent Excursion 89/Sessiz Gezi 89 (Enes Uysal, 5 min 48 sec, 2013) takes a different approach and employs abstracted and remixed imagery, which evokes forced migration, border crossing and search for one's identity, home and belonging. *Limbo* (Hamid Reza Rajaby, 2 min 5 sec 2013) problematizes further the insecurities of immigrants' existence, the enduring process of asylum application involving plausible detention and deportation and the impossibility to plan for the future and feel at home. The remix critically renders the problems of asylum application via a mosaic of visual and audio textures. The topics of home and belonging reach a further treatment in the video *Interna/Inmate* (María Jesús Valenzuela, 7 min 35 sec, 2013) that represents how foreign domestic workers define home within the shifting boundary between memory and lived reality, public and private space. The video reflects on home as a contested space, where employers and domestic workers negotiate socio-spatial boundaries along the divides of class, nationality, ethnicity, as well as socio-spatial hierarchies that render one's sense for intimacy. *Mobile Inner Peace/Mobil Ic Huzur* (Ayse Aybuke Samast 5 min 33 sec, 2013) contrarily exposes feelings of belonging to a domestic private space as the only sanctuary from busy urban life. The soundtrack of interpersonal telephone conversations functions as an imaginary reconnection between distant urban places, friends and relatives.

Nigdzie/Nowhere (David Sypniewski 6 min 6 sec, 2013) similarly connects notions of intimacy, memory and migration with senses of in-betweenness. The poetic video language of the piece explores the search of one's identity in a liminal *third space*, between public and private perceptions and belonging to two countries. The creative use of mixed textures and split screen realities entails the fragmented nature of the author's transcultural identity. *First Steps (Sorry + Please)* (Cedoux Kadima 2 min 58 sec, 2013) treats further the constitution of third spaces of transculturation and transcultural identities by employing the trope of the *migrant flâneur*. The repertoire of the immigrant stroller, which the video portrays (wandering around South Bank and approaching strangers) evokes the ambiguity, the uncertainty, the fluidity of the experiential and spatial construction of identity formation. The state of in-betweenness that the *migrant flâneur* embodies, as being both within and outside of the city dynamics, corresponds to the liminal, intermediate, *third space* of transculturation where cultural differences are negotiated. Thus, the motif of the *migrant flâneur* both

represents the perspectives of cultural Others and also potentially disrupts and *trans-codes* audiences' established socio-spatial imagination. Similarly, the protagonist of *Helping Others* (Adhurim Demiraj, 5 min 38 sec, 2013) tries to establish empathic connections with strangers while strolling around Euston Station in London. Thus, it can be concluded that the representation of streets, public places, urban settings and cityscapes also emerges as a repertoire, which symbolically renders the *contact zone* or the *third space* of potential transculturation between cultural Others and host society. With this regard, *How Do You Know Tarlabası/ Tarlabası'ni Nasil Bilirsiniz?* (Melis Coker, 5 min 21 sec, 2013) presents an idealised space of transcultural co-existence between Jewish, Armenian and Greek ethnic minorities through reconstructing a nostalgic version of planned for urban renewal neighbourhood in Istanbul. By exploring Istanbul's urban landscape, the video problematizes processes of gentrification, marginalization and cultural 'othering'.

The outlined thematic trajectories intersect within the conceptual vectors of the live-cinema performance *Eurovisions*. It aims to transcend borders and 're-map' Europe by re-semanticizing imagery that represents Europe's migration control apparatus and technologies of surveillance and biopolitics remixed with subjective perceptions and personal narratives on migration. The *trans-coding* function of the remix technique also becomes obvious in the work of the artist collective *European Souvenirs*. *Eurovisions* aims at deconstructing dominant media representations of migration by sampling media, film and news archives, found footage and sound compositions. Thus, the juxtaposition of various media specificities allows for the generation of intertextual connections between media content, which trigger the constitution of novel perceptions and meanings.

Overall, the discussed remix project *Remapping Europe* and the creative approaches within suggest the constitution of a critical and creative cartography, which re-imagines Europe as a space of transcultural co-existence. While, the organization of the media ateliers and workshops still follows nation-state frameworks, the produced videos and remixes transcend geo-political, cultural and social boundaries. The aesthetic praxis of sampling cultural repertoires and media references in a non-hierarchical intertextual order also renders Europe's cultural map as a rhizome of interconnected transcultural attachments.

6. Case study: the art investigative project *The Machine to Be Another* (2014)

The following chapter will explore how embodiment could transcend cultural boundaries by taking into consideration the art investigative project *The Machine to Be Another* by BeAnotherLab. It will be studied to what extent embodied affiliation with culture emerges as a relevant modality of transcultural aesthetics, as long as cultural engagement could be acquired through *somaesthetics*, or embodied aesthetic experiences, sensory involvement and corporeal participation in the co-creative process.

The conceptual dimensions of the project extend any understanding of “Europeanness” beyond geopolitical borders and suggest the co-existence of European and non-European perspectives, subjects and senses of belonging into a transcultural space. The different scenarios of ‘being in the shoes of another person’ that *The Machine to Be Another* offers to the public include gender swap, experiencing the stories of new comers to Europe, as well as understanding impaired people. The overall objective of *The Machine to Be Another* system is to provide the aesthetic experience of understanding ‘the self’ through ‘the other’ and through empathizing with another subject on both corporeal as well as emotional level.

The initial part of the chapter will present the media and technological characteristics of the project as well as the background of its initiation. Next, the discussion will turn towards theoretical perspectives on the interconnection between neuroscience, virtual reality and interactive arts in the process of building empathy. Then, several scenarios for interaction offered by the Machine will be taken into consideration. The text will tackle the relation between interface design and levels of immersion and identification. Thus, it will be questioned to what extent participatory installation-performances as *The Machine to Be Another* have the potential to transcend cultural boundaries via media and interpersonal (corporeal) interaction. Therefore, the outlined conceptual trajectory for building embodied virtual empathy as a modality of cultural and creative *trans-coding* will be explored as a constituent emerging element of transcultural aesthetics.

6.1 Summary of the project

The Machine to Be Another is an Open Source art investigative project addressing the relation between identity and empathy. Designed as an embodiment system, it merges

performative elements with protocols of neuroscience experiments in order to provide users with the immersive experience of seeing themselves in the body of another person. The project generates the aesthetic experience of perceiving the ‘self’ based on the understanding of the ‘other’ by employing a low-budget virtual reality technology with real human performances. Thus, it offers to users the opportunity to obtain another person’s point of view and the experience of embodied *telepresence*³⁸⁷ (the sensory perception of being present at another location.)

BeAnotherLab is composed of a transnational and interdisciplinary, or rather “anti-disciplinary”³⁸⁸ (as they like to define themselves) group of artists, researchers and activists, supported by a wide community of collaborators. The Lab has developed *The Machine to Be Another* with the support of its Barcelona-based partners – the Media lab Hangar and the Univeristat Pompeu Fabra. In addition, during a four-month art residency at the L’estruch Cultural Centre in Sabadell, Spain the Machine has been tested as a ‘social application’ in a series of performances and experiments involving local communities. The project has also participated within an event promoted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Madrid, called Medicine Hack Day, where BeAnotherLab has designed rehabilitation and diagnosis systems in collaboration with neurologists. The core members of BeAnotherLab team are: Philippe Bertrand – a Brazilian investigator, interdisciplinary artist and activist interested in interactive narratives and 2.0 tools of social intervention; Christian Cherene from Spain, who is a researcher, performer and an interactive system designer, dealing with rehabilitation game systems, hyper-documentation and neuroscience; Norma Deseke – a German-born activist, feminist and writer, focusing on alternative forms of knowledge production, political economy of art, science and technology; JJ Devereaux from USA – anthropologist and massage therapist dedicated to building empathy; Daniel González Franco from Colombia working on interactive art and virtual reality, binaural audio, embodiment and telepresence; Daanish Masood from Saudi Arabia, whose interests lie in peacemaking, inter-religious and interethnic conflict resolution, writing and storytelling; Marte Roel – a Mexican artist, lecturer and researcher on the intersection of art and technology, embodiment and spatial cognition, emotional conveyance, play behaviour and agency; and Arthur Tres from France, who is a programmer working on

³⁸⁷ Minsky, M. “Telepresence” in *Omni* 45–52 (June 1980)
<http://web.media.mit.edu/~minsky/papers/Telepresence.html>

³⁸⁸ See also <http://beanotherlab.org/>

agency and the empowerment of individuals and communities through digital means.³⁸⁹ Encompassing these multiple disciplines, the Lab has specialised in creating diverse experiences for various contexts, including art, conflict resolution, empathy, physical rehabilitation and neuroscientific research. These experiential aspects have been developed under a human-centred protocol and a community-based approach which allows communities to solve a particular problem as viewed by them, collaborate and duplicate research outcomes. The installation-performance format allows real people (artists, activist and audiences) to interact with each other and with technology. Thus, the objective of BeAnotherLab is to “use technology in novel ways, seeing it as a means for social relations rather than social isolation.”³⁹⁰ The Lab conducts informal interviews, workshops and debates with groups and individuals in order to design installation-performances which deal with issues such as peaceful coexistence, overcoming prejudices and solving ideological conflicts. The experiments are followed by discussions about participants’ perception of one’s identity after experiencing the world through the perspective of another person (in the case of *the users*) and sharing someone’s life story (in the case of *the performers*). Thus, BeAnotherLab art collective also aims at promoting empathy among individuals with different social, cultural and ideological backgrounds.³⁹¹

In terms of medial characteristics, *The Machine to Be Another* combines elements of telepresence and performance to construct the psycho-physical experience of being present in the body of another person by situating users and BeAnotherLab performers in two identical spaces. The user and the performer mirror each other’s movements through utilizing immersive goggles (head-mounted Oculus Rift displays), head tracking, wireless headphones, microphones, servomotor controlled cameras and a computer – the system is programmed in OpenFrameworks, Pure Data and OSC mobile apps³⁹². The user sees a real-time video recording from the perspective of the performer – the video transmitted to *the user*’s goggles is generated by a wide angle webcam attached to *the performer*. This combination of software and hardware creates the sensory illusion that the user dictates and ‘controls’ the movements of the performer. Furthermore, both of them are able to interact with objects and their own bodies. Another scenario allows for experiencing the internal narrative of the performer’s

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ See also <http://beanotherlab.org/>

³⁹¹ See also http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/?page_id=764

³⁹² Ibid.

thoughts and memories. For instance, *the performer* wears a microphone and tells a non lineal narrative related to the objects in the room (photographs, childhood toys, mirrors and others). When *the user* interacts with a specific object, *the performer* correspondingly talks about his or her experience and memories connected to this object. In this manner, *The Machine to Be Another* provides immersive understanding of the relationship between identity, embodiment and narrative.

The project has been exhibited within a number of international art and film festivals such as IDFA (the Netherlands) in 2014 and Tribeca Film Festival (USA) in 2015. It won the Learning, Sciences and Humanities Award from Laval Virtual – International Conferences and Exhibitions on Virtual Technologies and Uses (France) and an Honorary Mention from Ars Electronica (Austria) in 2014.



Fig. 51. The Machine to Be Another/ Documentation web page
http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/?page_id=829

6.2 Embodied empathy as a subject of neuroscience research

The Machine to Be Another's conceptual and methodological dimensions are inspired by published on the web, open access research on the interconnection between corporeal experiences and empathy, which BeAnotherLab has translated into a low budget Creative Commons technology. Recent studies explore in how far embodied simulation mechanisms, in particular of actions, emotions and corporeal sensations have implications in the constitution of empathy and social cognition.

For instance, Henrik Ehrsson and his colleagues at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden have conducted experiments on studying how the brain constructs a representation of one's own body through the integration of different sensory modalities such as vision, touch, and proprioception (one's ability to sense stimuli arising within

the body regarding position, motion, and equilibrium). The aim of Group Erhsson is to use neuroimaging³⁹³ and behavioural methods to study how one experiences one's own body as an object distinct from the environment.³⁹⁴ Among the Group's investigation is the experiment known as the 'rubber hand illusion' or the possibility to induce in healthy subjects the sensation of owning dummy limbs. During the experiment, healthy individuals experience an artificial limb (rubber hand) as if it were part of their own body. The subjects observe a facsimile of a human hand (the rubber hand) while one of their own hands is hidden from view. Both the subject's hand and the artificial hand are stroked, repeatedly and synchronously, with a probe. Therefore, the subjects experience an illusion in which 'the felt touch' coincides with 'the seen touch'. This correspondence brings the visual receptive field into alignment with the rubber hand, resulting in activation of premotor cortex neurons.³⁹⁵

Another set of experiments conducted by Group Erhsson reveals the existence of a causal relationship between the representations of body space and perception of external space. 'The body size effect' experiment was carried out with the help of participants who experience the ownership of a Barbie doll body and a larger than human size body, in order to test how the size of one's own body determines the perceived size of external objects and distance.³⁹⁶

Furthermore, through an 'out-of-body illusion' Erhsson and colleagues have demonstrated that when healthy individuals experience being located in a different place from their own body, they undergo a process of disowning this body and no longer perceive it as a part of themselves. In this experiment, the conscious sense of self is displaced by tactile manipulation and change in the visual perspective of the participating subjects. It has been observed that this effect is best induced when the brain has to perform multisensory integration of stimuli. Thus, it can be proved that

³⁹³ Neuroimaging (or brain imaging) is a new discipline within medicine, neuroscience and psychology. It involves using different techniques to image directly or indirectly the structure and the function of the nervous system.

³⁹⁴ See also <http://www.ehrssonlab.se/>

³⁹⁵ Henrik Ehrsson, Charles Spence and Richard E. Passingham "'That's my hand!' Activity in the premotor cortex reflects feeling of ownership of a limb." (online) http://www.neuro.ki.se/ehrsson/pdfs/Ehrsson_science_2004_with_SOM.pdf

³⁹⁶ Bjorn van der Hoort, Arvid Guterstam and Henrik Ehrsson, "Being Barbie: the size of one's own body determines the perceived size of the world". PLoS One 2011 May 25; 6(5): e20195.

there is “a relationship between the representation of self-location in the local environment and the multisensory representation of one’s own body.”³⁹⁷

At the same time, the discovery of mirror neurons by Giacomo Rizzolatti and his colleagues at University of Parma in the early 1990’s has proven a relation to empathy and how the ‘self’ bonds to the ‘other.’ Mirror neurons respond not only when a subject performs a given action, but also when the subject observes someone else performing the very same action. With this regard, the English film and theatre director Peter Brook has claimed that mirror neurons reveal the mysterious connection between on-stage performers and the audience – the sight of a performing actor generates in the brain of the spectator the same brain areas active in the performer’s brain, in relation to both actions and emotions.³⁹⁸ It could be further suggested that this perspective on the function of mirror neurons also entails connections with Laura Marks’ thesis on haptic visibility (as a cinematic representation of bodies, gestures and textures) as a basis for intercultural empathy, discussed earlier in the second chapter.

Consequently, in the case of *The Machine to be Another* virtual bodies or dummy limbs are replaced by the body of the performer, whose role is to reproduce as accurately as possible the movements of the user. Simultaneously, the user has the opportunity to explore the environment through the body of the performer. In order to maintain sensation of embodiment, each one of them must try to reproduce the other’s motion and behaviour as accurately as possible. Usually, the user and the performer are situated in different places, which seem identical. The performer holds a camera capturing her or his point of view, whose orientation mimics the head orientation of the user by following data sent by a sensor attached to the user’s head. Thus, empathy could be stimulated by provoking the sensation of embodiment through the system. Moreover, the narrated by the performer personal experiences are complemented with the multisensory cues from objects manipulation. Thus, the narrative aspects allow for further user’s immersion into the performer’s point of view, not only on a physical, but also on an emotional level. The embodiment effect is enhanced by allowing for a real tactile sensation instead of employing haptic devices (e.g. vibration motors) used in neuroscience experiments. The Machine also provides the replication of detailed

³⁹⁷ Arvid Guterstam and Henrik Ehrsson. “Disowning one’s seen real body during an out-of-body illusion.” In *Consciousness and Cognition* (2012) 21, 1037-1042, 1037.
http://130.237.111.254/ehrrsson/pdfs/guterstam_ehrrsson_2012.PDF

³⁹⁸ Craighero Rizzolatti and Corrado Sinigaglia, *Mirrors in the Brain: How Our Minds Share Actions, Emotions, and Experience*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

gestures and movements, such as fingers motion, which traditional computer vision tracking systems are unable to achieve easily.³⁹⁹

A white paper published by BeAnotherLab indicates that the performers tend to copy the movements of users with a certain delay, although the head tracking controls the camera in real time. According to the Lab's observations, the users accept the motion latency and replicate movement slowly in order to achieve a higher sensorimotor control.⁴⁰⁰ With this regard, the Lab establishes a connection with recent studies on embodiment, which have demonstrated that in the case of real-time head tracking and head-mounted displays in a virtual environment, there may not be a requirement for concurrent physical stimuli, since the former involve motor acts and corresponding perceptual changes comparable to the physical reality.

A research conducted by the Event Lab at the University of Barcelona questions the extent to which one can experience virtual body representation within an immersive virtual environment as her or his own biological body. For the purpose, it has been suggested to address “the ensemble of sensations that arise in conjunction with being inside, having, and controlling a body especially in relation to virtual reality applications” as Sense of Embodiment (SoE). According to the authors, Sense of Embodiment can be understood in relation to three subcomponents: “the sense of self-location, the sense of agency, and the sense of body ownership”.⁴⁰¹

In this context, BeAnotherLab employs the three variables of Sense of Embodiment and the observation that the strong illusion of being in the location depicted by the virtual reality can occur when the sensorimotor dimensions for perception are similar to those within the physical reality, or when the participants can perceive with their bodies in the same way as normally.⁴⁰² With this regard, Maria V. Sanchez-Vives and Mel Slater claim that:

The key to this approach is that the sense of ‘being there’ in VE [virtual environment] is grounded on the ability to ‘do’ there (...) For example, if the visual

³⁹⁹ See also http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/?page_id=764

⁴⁰⁰ Philippe Bertrand, *'The machine to Be Another': Embodiment Performance to Promote Empathy among Individuals*. Online http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/THE_MACHINE_TO_BE_ANOTHER_PAPER_2014.pdf

⁴⁰¹ Konstantina Kilteni, Raphaela Groten and Mel Slater, “The Sense of Embodiment in Virtual Reality” in *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments* (2012), 373-387, 374-5.

⁴⁰² Philippe Bertrand *'The Machine to Be Another': Embodiment Performance to Promote Empathy among Individuals*. Online http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/THE_MACHINE_TO_BE_ANOTHER_PAPER_2014.pdf

flow indicates a walking motion, presence should be increased if the participant's body movements correspond to real walking.⁴⁰³

Moreover, Sanchez-Vives and Slater emphasize that in head-mounted display systems (where all real-world visual input is removed) the sense of presence in the VE is enhanced, if the visuospatial perspective of the user is egocentric.⁴⁰⁴ Similarly, other studies conducted by Ehrsson Group have proven that identification with an artificial body is greater from first-person perspective than from third-person perspective.⁴⁰⁵ Correspondingly, *The Machine to Be Another* allows for a subjective visual perspective and first-person camera shooting, which trigger the participants' sense of self-location and immersion.

Another range of studies suggests that the interconnection between mirror neurons and empathy goes beyond the observation of physical action and it can be relevant also in relation to social skills.⁴⁰⁶ BeAnotherLab has employed exactly this potential of mirror neurons in order to design the experiences of virtual body extension into different social, cultural and ideological contexts.

In this direction, recent experiments have proven that self-other overlap of body representations could play a crucial role in social cognition. An investigation conducted by researchers from Royal Holloway – University of London, Central European University – Budapest and Radboud University – Nijmegen employ the 'the rubber hand illusion' in order to induce to light-skinned participants an ownership of a dark-skinned hand. The study questions whether implicit racial attitudes could be altered via increased self-other bodily overlap and it proves that the illusory ownership of dark-skinned limbs is an effective way to reduce negative racial attitudes towards dark skin and outgroups in general.⁴⁰⁷

Similarly, researchers from Event Lab – University of Barcelona, University of Rome and University College London, have tested that racial bias decreases when participants embody virtually dark skin bodies. Apart from using virtual reality

⁴⁰³ Maria Sanchez-Vives and Mel Slater "From Presence to Consciousness through Virtual Reality" in *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, (2005) 6.4, 332-339, 333.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ See also Petkova, V. I., Khoshnevis, M., & Ehrsson, H. H. The perspective matters! Multisensory integration in ego-centric reference frames determines full-body ownership. In *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2, 35 (2011).

⁴⁰⁶ Oberman, L., Pineda, J. Ramachandran, V. "The human mirror neuron system: A link between action observation and social skills" in *Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci* (2007), 62-66. <http://scan.oxfordjournals.org/content/2/1/62.full.pdf+html>

⁴⁰⁷ Maister, L., Sebanz, N., Knoblich, G., Tsakiris, M. "Experiencing ownership over a dark-skinned body reduces implicit racial bias" in *Cognition* 128(2), (2013), 170-178.

representations, the study involves measurement of participants' racial bias through a racial Implicit Association Test (IAT) – comparing results from three days before the experiment and immediately after the virtual reality exposure. The research outcomes indicate that embodiment may change negative interpersonal attitudes.⁴⁰⁸

The mentioned experiments signify that embodiment plays a significant role in the constitution of virtual empathy. Furthermore, they reveal the potential of virtual reality and embodied experiences to contribute to processes of transculturation. Thus, as suggested in the previous chapters, the experiential and corporeal dimensions of creative and artistic expressions could trigger cross-cultural understanding and affiliation. Furthermore, it can be noted that *The Machine to Be Another* directly employs the potential of virtual reality and embodiment to overcome discrimination by offering several scenarios for interaction related to race, gender, physical ability and open-structured interpersonal exchange.

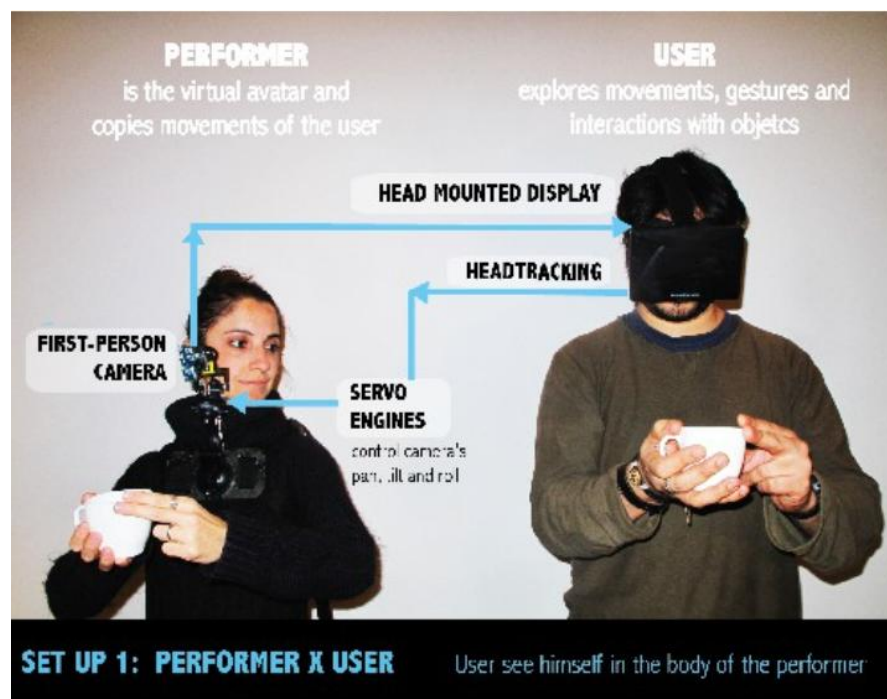


Fig. 52. Basic functional diagram of the system:
http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/THE_MACHINE_TO_BE_ANOTHER_PAPER_2014.pdf

⁴⁰⁸ Peck, T. C., Seinfeld, S., Aglioti, S. M., & Slater, M. "Putting yourself in the skin of a black avatar reduces implicit racial bias" in *Consciousness and Cognition*, 22(3), (2013), 779-787.

6.3 Virtual empathy via interface design and immersive aesthetic experiences

The Machine to Be Another has certain characteristics of a variable media artwork⁴⁰⁹, since its medial specificity suggests multiple scenarios and versions, defined by users' interaction. The participatory character of the installation entails that each user can co-create a specific experiential progression, resulting in numerous versions of the same work. Lev Manovich considers that variability is a characteristic not only of new media artworks, but also of every "new media object [which] is not something fixed once and for all, but something that can exist in different, potentially infinite versions".⁴¹⁰ With this regard, the following section will establish a conceptual interconnection between media variability and processes of transculturation. The constitution of transcultural identity(ies) is a non-fixed, dynamic and processual construction, defined by variability and co-existence of multiple versions of belonging and identification. Thus, at macro level, transcultural identity formation resembles the unfixed status of a new media object. Moreover, it can be hypothesized that the experience of multiple and different (cultural) versions of oneself via a variable media work, such as *The Machine to Be Another*, could stimulate one's transcultural awareness and sensitivity. Furthermore, the different scenarios that the Machine offers at a micro level, related to gender, race and mutual understanding, are also vital for triggering processes of transculturation. Similarly, Bolter and Grusin have suggested the generation of virtual empathy via identification with avatars and virtual versions on one's own self.⁴¹¹ Overall, it should be considered that the incitement of transcultural dynamics and embodied empathy within virtual reality depends on the artwork's interface design.

According to Friedrich Kittler the convergence of all media and the digitalization of information erase the differences between media specificities. Then, the extinction of mediums is reduced to surface variations, which are distinguishable only as different interfaces. Kittler sees the alteration of analogue image and sound into a computer code as a factor for the loss of "sense perception".⁴¹² In contrast with Kittler's view, it can be argued that in the domain of new media arts, it is exactly the interface, which releases a (poly)sensory experience.

⁴⁰⁹ The concept of *variable media art* has been initiated by the Variable Media Initiative and the artist and curator Jon Ippolito from Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. The Variable Media approach has suggested and implemented a medium-independent preservation practices of obsolete media art.

⁴¹⁰ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), 36.

⁴¹¹ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 247.

⁴¹² Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1-2.

In *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion* (2003) Oliver Grau, thoroughly discusses the relation between interface and aesthetics and distinguishes a range of immersive experiences, which happen through different interface features. Grau explores the phenomenon of immersion from an art historical perspective, claiming that the idea of placing the viewer into an enclosed image space of illusion in order to initiate a feeling of being within the images does not originate with the technical invention of virtual reality. Grau's examples on the constitution of presence within an image environment include older visual media such as frescos, paintings, panoramas and film. Still, the original purpose of the immersive effect remains the same – “to give the viewer the strongest impression possible of being at the location where the images are”.⁴¹³ Moreover, Grau comments on immersive virtual environments from the end of the 1990's, released through vanishing, or the so-called natural interface. Such interface features head-mounted displays (HDM) and cave automatic virtual environment (CAVE)⁴¹⁴ – the former of which has been employed by *The Machine to Be Another*. Within such immersive (and often synaesthetic) installations a user's presence in the physical space is dominated by a psychological and embodied absorption into the virtual environment. According to Oliver Grau, then “immersion could be an intellectually stimulating process,” however in most cases it is a passage from one mental state into another, “characterised by diminishing critical distance to what is shown and increasing emotional involvement in what is happening.”⁴¹⁵ The social dimensions of *The Machine to Be Another*, however, entail that the interdependence between interface and aesthetic experience could be released via a balance between kinaesthetic and intellectual involvement. Furthermore, the performative characteristics of the participatory installation *The Machine to Be Another* add a theatrical element to the aesthetic dimensions of the work. In this regard, Brenda Laurel finds a direct correlation between digital technology and dramatic forms and argues that interface design and human-computer interaction is based on, and could be analyzed via a theatrical paradigm.⁴¹⁶ The *chronotope*⁴¹⁷ of *The Machine to be Another* explores several

⁴¹³ Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press 2003), 14.

⁴¹⁴ CAVE installations have the shape of a cube, whose six surfaces can be used as projection screens, surrounding the viewer(s) inside, who wear 3D glasses in order to perceive the image environment.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid. 13.

⁴¹⁶ Brenda Laurel, *Computers as Theatre*. (Addison-Wesley Professional, 2nd Edition, 2013).

⁴¹⁷ Bakhtin's notion of 'time-space' can be applied in understanding immersive art installations, whose experiential dimensions depend on a specific temporal and spatial interconnection. The use of the notion of chronotop within immersive art has been also suggested by Anna Tchernakova in

scenarios of performativity, that allow users to transcend gender, cultural and ethnic boundaries. Thus, the offered set-ups evoke processes of transculturation, which is triggered on a corporeal level.

6.4 *The Machine to Be Another* scenarios for interaction

The Gender Swap scenario involves the participation of two users from different genders who virtually exchange their points of view and bodily features. The embodiment perception is created by synchronised mimicry of each other's movements, thus both participants must agree upon following each other's behaviour and actions. The sensorimotor co-relation between users also raises awareness about the limits of the other person. The Gender Swap set-out of *The Machine to Be Another* has gained international popularity in relation to addressing gender identity and queer theory approaches. It has been a finalist of the Fast.Co Design Awards (USA) and presented at Mu Art Space and Het Nieuwe Instituut (the Netherlands) and the Digital Art Centre Taipei (Taiwan), among others.⁴¹⁸

The gender bending scenario aims to destabilize essentialism and sexism, by creating an interhuman body transcendence that may generate shared perceptions and mutual understanding. The artwork does not exploit exclusively aspects of gender performativity, but rather establishes a post-gender embodied equality, which transgresses the socially induced dualism between women and men. In this sense, *The Machine to Be Another* renders the user into a *cyborg* identity, to employ Donna Haraway's metaphor. The cyborg, Haraway argues, transgresses ideological boundaries and hierarchical dichotomies between self and other, mind and body, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, male and female.⁴¹⁹ Haraway's manifesto aims to reverse and displace persistent in Western tradition logics and practices of domination "of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self."⁴²⁰ The self is "the One" who is not dominated, who is autonomous, but whose dominant position is an illusion – "a dialectic of apocalypse with the other. Yet to be other is to be

'Chronovist' conceptualisation method: exploring new approaches to structuring narrative in interactive immersive audio/visual media. (University College, London, 2015).

⁴¹⁸ See also Bertrand, Philippe "The Machine to Be Another": Embodiment Performance to Promote Empathy among Individuals. Online http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/THE_MACHINE_TO_BE_ANOTHER_PAPER_2014.pdf

⁴¹⁹ Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: science, technology and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century" in *The Cybercultures Reader* (ed. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy) (London and New York: Routledge: 2000), 302.

⁴²⁰ Ibid. 313.

multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial.”⁴²¹ According to Haraway, however, high-tech culture challenges these dualisms. Then, the image of the cyborg emerges as a post-identity resolution between the Self and the Other. Thus, the gender swap scenario has the potential to *trans-code* the social construction of gender at a corporeal level. Moreover, I would suggest that, to a certain degree, Haraway’s cyborg theory could be also understood as synonymous to the transcultural paradigm, since both entail overcoming of essentialism and binary oppositions.

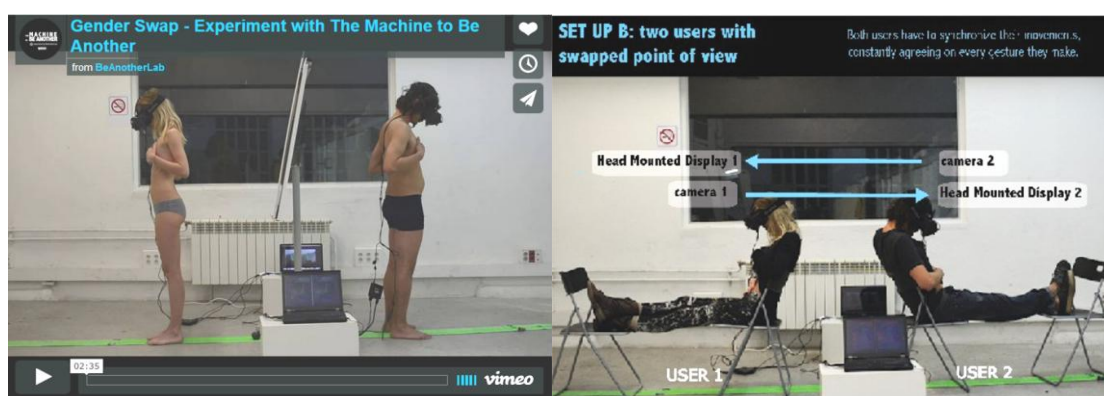


Fig. 53. Gender Swap – investigation on Gender Identity, Queer Theory and Mutual Respect
http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/?page_id=1000

The negotiation of boundaries between socially constructed dichotomies is pursued by BeAnotherLab not only in relation to gender, but also to race. In correspondence to earlier discussed research on subverting racial bias via virtual reality, *The Machine to Be Another* offers the so-called *empathy towards an immigrant* performance. The ‘plot’ allows users to see themselves in the body of Youssoupha who is an immigrant from Senegal, living in Spain. Youssoupha shares narratives about his childhood, his passion for dance and his story of immigration in accordance with users’ interaction with specific objects. In comparison with neuroscience experiments (using virtual reality avatars to convey identification with dark-skinned body), the Machine creates an embodiment system via providing a real-time interaction between two persons. The automatic equation between ‘immigrant’ and ‘dark-skin’, offered by this scenario, could be problematized as a stigmatizing practice of ‘othering’, which enforces stereotypical perceptions of immigration. The opportunity for building a dialogical relationship between the participating individuals, however, entails a transcultural potential. With this regard, a diversity of participants and multiplicity of

⁴²¹ Ibid.

shared personal narratives of (im)migration, could enhance transcultural empathy between self and cultural others.

In this direction, BeAnotherLab has encouraged the organization of performances, especially dedicated to understanding the experiences of new comers and asylum seekers in Europe. In August 2016 the Lab showcased a programme of embodied narratives at Somerset House, London in collaboration with Good Chance Theatre. The performances allowed to inhabit virtually the body of another person and to experience the perspectives of workers, volunteers, and refugees. This series of narratives and installation-performances focuses on triggering in-depth understanding about asylum, displacement and everyday life in a refugee camp. At the same time, BeAnotherLab foresees the organization of workshops for the pre-recorded video narratives at Hangar Lab, Barcelona. Moreover, *The Machine to Be Another* set-ups are participating within the Pixelache Festival “Interfaces for Empathy,” taking place in Helsinki in September 2016. The conceptual framework of the festival suggests that empathy could be learned through bodily presence, experimental communication and embodied and alternate visions of perception.⁴²²

From a broader perspective, BeAnotherLab’s interdisciplinary artists and researchers intend to deepen into tackling social issues, such as conflict mediation, (trans-)gender identity and mutual respect. The methodological design of the Lab’s future experiments foresees to include qualitative questionnaires in order to evaluate the efficacy of the Machine for generating embodied empathy. Thus, the potential of each thematic scenario to transcend cultural, ethnic, gender and other forms of discrimination can be explored to a greater extent. Then, the *trans-coding* potential of the Machine can be studied as a subject of a case-specific ethnographic research.



Fig. 54. *Empathy towards an immigrant scenario*, http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/?page_id=829

⁴²² See also festival webpage: <http://festival.pixelache.ac/posts/pixelache-festival-2016-interfaces-for-empathy-22-25-9>

6.5 Through the subjective camera of another

My personal experience with *The Machine to Be Another* took place at Barcelona Centre for Contemporary Culture (CCCB) in January 2016. The participatory installation was exhibited within the exhibition +HUMANS at CCCB. This context guaranteed a selection of interactive and immersive art works, dealing with the social and ethical dimensions of emerging technologies and their role in the existence of human species.⁴²³

Similarly to the described above Gender Swap repertoire of actions, the installation allowed for interaction between two randomly chosen members of the audience (thus, I could participate with a Spanish teenager visiting the exhibition with his mother and younger sister.) The teenager and I were directed into the process by BeAnotherLab performers, who explained it is vital to keep our bodies' coordination in synch. The teenager and I were seated on identical chairs, facing each other and mirroring each other's glance. A white curtain between us divided the gallery space in two symmetrical halves. Then the head-mounted displays were inserted, so we could look through a camera-eye. The first image through the goggles you would imagine is your own legs, seated body and hands. The sensation of unfamiliarity is disturbing as instead you encounter someone else's corporeal features and limbs. We were offered to play with an object – a *maneki-neko* (a Japanese “beckoning cat”, rather famous as the “Chinese lucky cat”⁴²⁴). The expectations for perceiving the object through your own viewpoint is replaced with a subjective camera recording taken through the eyes of your counterpart. Your own tactile actions of holding the object are substituted with similar actions executed by the hands of the other participant. Thus, the coincidence between visual and haptic perception produces a feeling of owning unfamiliar fingers and hands. Then you are asked to mimic gesticulations, shown by the performers on both sides of the room. Once again, you experience your own movements as being released via the body of the other person. The third stage of interaction offers a free open-structured choreography between you and your equivalent part. Within this process, initially you become responsible for your own body only as a prototype of the motions of the other user, what the creators from BeAnotherLab define as sensorimotor control. The perception of control or leading is constantly negotiated as each one awaits or initiates a movement within a certain time lapse. You realize that your motions are meaningful

⁴²³ See also exhibition webpage: <http://www.cccb.org/en/exhibitions/file/human-/129032>

⁴²⁴ Due to its popularity among shops owned by Chinese merchants.

only if they are reproduced by the other participant and generate a continuous circuit of a sensorimotor play. Simultaneously, your own movements become a function of the other person's gestures – your body starts to simulate the other user's actions and it transforms from a prototype into their replica. The aesthetic experience happens on the shifting boundary between being yourself and the other, within a liminal, in-between space of double identification. It offers a dual sensation of presence within your own body, plus a sense of embodied telepresence within the body of the other participant. Thus, the overall immersive experience shifts between being someone else and concurrently preserving your own corporeal consciousness. It could be suggested that the experiential dimensions of transiting two bodies and inhabiting a hybrid *third space* in between, also resembles the ambiguity of identification and identify fragmentation, inscribed in the transcultural model. The freedom to be different from others as well as from your own self, in correspondence with Epstein's reading of transculturality, emerges as a relevant conceptual framework. Surprisingly, the final episode of the performance involves looking into a mirror, thus instead of your own reflection you encounter the full-size image of the other person. Next, the mirror is removed and once almost convinced you have become another, you are also invited to shake hands with a webcam rendering of your own self – real-time recorded through the eyes of the other. The multiplicity of self-reflexive perspectives and sensorial output function as a disruptive camera that ruptures regular modes of perception and reveals multiple complementary views. Similarly, Suhr and Willerslev have argued that the destabilization of our common-sense perception via disruptive montage could transcend cultural boundaries. As discussed in the previous chapter, according to them, montage offers a tool to break the mimetic dogma and make the invisible visible, also in terms of social theory.⁴²⁵ Then the empathic potential of the Machine can be discovered in the very possibility for self destabilization and imaginary extension of one's self in multiple versions.

The phenomenological description of the Machine, to a certain degree, reveals the work's correlation to the genre of close-circuit video art. Close-circuit video directly transcends the visitor from a spectator into a performer within the imagery environment. This effect is achieved by transmitting a video signal of on-site recording of the viewer and simultaneous screening of her or his behaviour. According to Margaret Morse,

⁴²⁵ Rane Willerslev and Christian Suhr, "Introduction. Montage as an amplifier of Invisibility" in Suhr and Willerslev (ed *Transcultural Montage* (Berghahn Books, 2013), 9.

closed-circuit video plays with “presence”, since the ““live” camera relays the image and sound of visitors to one or more monitors”, thus “closed-circuit installation explores the fit between images and the built environment and the processes of mediating identity and power.”⁴²⁶ Often closed-circuit video art explores conceptual connections with surveillance technologies. Contrary, according to my experience, *The Machine to Be Another* does not entail the perception of being observed and panoptically enveloped. This sensation is achieved by the coincidence of both functions – being the object and the subject of gaze – which is conveyed via first-person perspective. The employment of what can be defined as a closed-circuit subjective camera rather enhances the users’ agency and the intimate and interpersonal character of the work.

From a cinematic perspective, the aesthetic experience of wearing goggles and embodying the optical angle and corporeal features of another person resembles motifs from Kathryn Bigelow’s cyberpunk film *Strange Days* (1995), as a film reference for the use of subjective camera and technically achieved self-referentiality. *Strange Days* takes place in a crime-driven Los Angeles during the last two days of 1999, and the first-person camera angles recreate human’s experiences of (virtual) sex and violent crimes. In the rise of the new millennium, the new addictive hip entertainment is “jacking in” by attaching an illegal “squid” device to your skull, which records events directly from the wearer’s cerebral cortex. When played back through a MiniDisc-like device, it allows the user to embody the recorder’s memories and physical perceptions. This virtual reality sensation “is not like TV, only better. This is like a piece of someone’s life – straight from the cerebral cortex,” as the movie’s protagonist Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes) seductively explains. While *Strange Days* employs subjective camera to convey obsessive exploitation of the senses, *The Machine to Be Another* uses first-person webcam shooting (undoubtedly less spectacularly than Bigelow’s aesthetics) in order to generate potential empathy with cultural Others.

According to the specificities of my person interaction, *The Machine to Be Another* generates interpersonal identification as an exchange of corporeal impulses. The lack of cultural references (be it in sensorial or narrative form) makes irrelevant a potential cross-cultural exchange. Still, the destabilized common-sense perception of reality serves as an extension of the self in a mosaic of one’s multiple versions, which corresponds to the model of transcultural identity formation. Augmented by the

⁴²⁶ Margaret Morse, “The Body, the Image, and the Space In-Between” in *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 162.

disruptive closed-circuit subjective camera of the Machine, the diverse scenarios for interplay and pre-recorded narratives on the topics of race, gender, migration, asylum, among others, potentially trigger deeper emotional and empathic engagement.

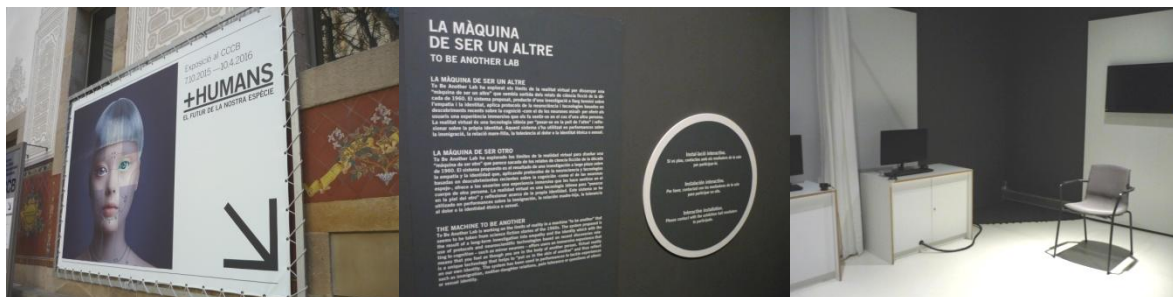


Fig. 55. Images taken at CCCB, Barcelona in January 2016 (personal archive)

6.5 Conclusions: the European Self ‘in the shoes of’ cultural Others

The objective of this chapter was to explore the potential for embodied transculturation via the analysis of the investigative art project The Machine to Be Another by BeAnotherLab. The first section focused on recent studies, which explore in how far embodied simulation mechanisms have implications for the constitution of empathy and social cognition.

A summary of recent neuroscience research experiments revealed the interrelation between embodiment and processes of identification between self and others. For instance, Group Erhsson uses neuroimaging and behavioural methods to study how one could experience one’s own body as a distinct object and vice versa. The ‘rubber hand illusion’ experiment, ‘the body size effect’ experiment and ‘out-of-body illusion’ reveal how the conscious sense of self is displaced by tactile manipulations and change in the visual perspective of the participating subjects. Moreover, mirror neurons explain the generation of empathy when a subject observes and performs corresponding actions, or when a subject observes someone else performing the very same action. This view was extended into the suggestion that the function of mirror neurons also evokes connections with Laura Marks’ film theory on haptic visibility as a cinematic representation of bodies, gestures and textures, which could be understood as a basis for building intercultural understanding.

Another set of neuroscience studies questions whether implicit racial attitudes could be altered via increased self-other bodily overlap. Conducted experiments prove that illusory ownership of (virtual) dark-skinned body and limbs is an effective way to reduce negative racial attitudes towards dark skin and outgroups in general. The research also involves measurement of participants' racial bias through a racial Implicit Association Test. The results from the mentioned experiments signify that embodiment plays a significant role in the constitution of virtual empathy. Thus, they reveal the prospect of virtual reality and embodied experiences to potentially contribute to processes of transculturation.

The methodological design of the *The Machine to Be Another* directly employs the potential of virtual reality and embodiment to overcome discrimination by offering several scenarios for interaction related to race, gender, physical ability and open-structured interpersonal exchange. According to experiments, the sense of empathy is better achieved via first-person camera perspective, which the Machine employs by using a coordination of video signals between head-mounted display (on the head of the user) and subjective webcam (carried by the performer). Moreover, the Machine makes use of the different levels of sense of embodiment – the sense of self-location, the sense of agency, and the sense of body ownership.

From a media art historical perspective, the sense of immersion in the image space can be studied via the specificities of the interface design. Thus, a certain connection between media variability and processes of transculturation could be established. The constitution of transcultural identity(ies) is a non-fixed, dynamic and processual construction, defined by variability and co-existence of multiple versions of belonging and identification. Then, the experience of multiple and different (cultural) versions of oneself via a variable media work, such as *The Machine to Be Another*, could stimulate one's transcultural awareness and sensitivity. The social dimensions of *The Machine to Be Another* also entail that the interdependence between interface and aesthetic experience could be released via a balance between kinaesthetic and intellectual involvement.

Within the Gender Swap experiment and so-called *empathy towards an immigrant* scenarios the Machine creates an embodiment system via providing a real-time interaction between two persons. In comparison with neuroscience experiments (using virtual reality avatars to convey identification with dark-skinned body), the Machine offers the opportunity for extension of the self in the body of another, beyond

gender, racial, ethnic, cultural difference. Thus, the Machine potentially plays a subversive role by transgressing the ideological boundaries and hierarchical dichotomies between self and other, mind and body, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, male and female, which Donna Haraway has conceptualised via the metaphor of the *cyborg*. By transcending the user into a *cyborg*, *The Machine to Be Another* opens the potential to *trans-code* social constructions such as gender and race at a corporeal and sensorial level. Thus, it can be suggested that, to a certain extent, Haraway's cyborg theory could be also understood as synonymous to the transcultural paradigm, since both entail overcoming of essentialism and binary oppositions.

Furthermore, the possibility for establishing a dialogical relationship between the participants, also implies a processes of transculturation and generation of empathy between self and cultural others. The potential of each thematic scenario to *trans-code* cultural, ethnic, gender and other forms of discrimination can be studied with ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and qualitative questionnaires on users' experiences – a research, which BeAnotherLab foresees to conduct in the future.

A phenomenological account of my personal interaction with the Machine revealed that the aesthetic experience happens on the shifting boundary of double identification between self and other. The use of subjective camera generates a sense of self-referentiality, while the closed-circuit video signal triggers telepresence in the body of the other participant. The dual sensation of simultaneous presence happens in an intermediate space. The experiential dimensions of inhabiting a hybrid *third space* in between two bodies, conceptually resembles the ambiguity of transculturation and identity fragmentation, inscribed in the transcultural model – the freedom to be different from others as well as from one's own self, as suggested by Mikhail Epstein's reading of transculturality. Moreover, the multiplicity of self-reflexive perspectives and synaesthetic perceptions function as a form of disruptive montage, which subverts regular modes of perception and compiles multiple complementary views. As Suhr and Willerslev have argued, montage offers a tool to break the mimetic dogma and make the invisible visible. Thus, the destabilization of common-sense perception could transcend cultural boundaries. Therefore, the empathic potential of the Machine can be discovered in the somaesthetic fusion between subjective camera view and sensorimotor self-destabilization, which provokes imaginary extension of one's self in multiple versions.

While the investigative art project *The Machine to Be Another* does not claim an exclusive relation to the European thematic, it still offers a conceptual model of cross-

cultural understanding between Self and cultural Others. The diverse scenarios for interaction, which foresee the inclusion of newcomers and migrants' perspectives, could provide the (European) Self with the opportunity to potentially embody cultural Others.

7. Conclusions

This research project aimed at mapping the key role that media, arts and culture could play for re-building empathy, senses of belonging and cross-cultural understanding across Europe. The central objective was to study the potential constitution of a shared semantic sphere – a social imaginary – which overcomes processes of *othering*, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance, and rather triggers plurality, diversity and recognition of cultural differences in European societies. In this sense, it has been argued that the transcultural paradigm offers a relevant perspective for building new European narratives. It provides a shift towards creating an inclusive social imaginary – a transcultural imaginary – which allows for a dialogical and empathic relationship between Self and cultural Others. Thus, cultural integration in Europe can be also reconceptualised as a transformative process of transculturation. As argued throughout the dissertation, the transformative dynamics of transculturation has been exemplified eloquently by the work of artists and creative makers, who have expressed concerns about Europe's contemporary condition. Moreover, their creative expressions signify the emergence of a common aesthetic language, which can be defined as transcultural aesthetics. With this regard, one of the central research objectives of this study was to explore transcultural aesthetics as a cross-cultural, creative and media praxis, which is intrinsically interrelated with the construction of the transcultural European imaginary.

The investigation departed from the hypothesis that transcultural aesthetic praxis is defined by four complementary *trans-coding* modalities: representation of transcultural identities as a discursive strategy for the negotiation of cultural differences; sampling of cultural repertoires in intertextual, intermedial and cross-cultural order as an expression of symbolic resistance and generation of a *third space* between cultures; *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle of critical media participation – a re-thought version of Stuart Hall's communication model of encoding/decoding, defined by the generation of new meanings at the receiving end; and embodied cross-cultural affiliation, as a transculturalizing strategy at a non-verbal, sensorial and affective level. The newly constructed conceptual model on transcultural aesthetics and modalities of cultural and creative *trans-coding* was studied in relation to both theoretical perspectives and empirical examples of creative expressions, which imply the emergence of a shared social imaginary in European cultural space.

7.1 Third space tropes and real-and-imagined creatively reified ‘Another Europe’

The theoretical exploration of the notion of transcultural imaginary began with outlining its dimensions in relation to spatiality and socio-spatial identity formation. Homi Bhabha’s conceptualization of a liminal, in-between *third space*, where hybrid identities are constituted, was related to Edward Soja’s understanding of the *thirdspace* as a *real-and-imagined* entity and a critical strategy of *thirling-as-othering* that opens the potential for continuous cultural transformations and evokes a multiplicity of co-existing perspectives intrinsic for the transcultural paradigm. The interrelation between reality, (media) representation, imagination and transformative potentiality can be also seen as the basis for the emergence of transcultural imaginary. The theoretical discussion was supported by the documentary *Our Colonial Hangover* (Sunny Bergman, 2014) and the art installation *House of Eutopia* (Filip Berte, 2006 – 2013). In correspondence, this theoretical basis was translated into the first *trans-coding* modality – representation of transcultural identities and processes of transculturation.

According to Stuart Hall’s theory of representation, the constitution of cultural identity happens as a discursive formation. Thus, the ‘politics of representation’ and the discursive practice of stereotyping are the product of hegemonic and preferred meanings. In opposition, *trans-coding* emerges as a counter-practice of negotiating preferred connotations. Thus, it can be suggested that the negotiation of cultural meanings and *trans-coding* of ‘otherness’ can be achieved via the representation of transcultural identities. Transcultural identity is constituted via participation in several cultures, which allows for the manifestation of difference within the same personality, as being simultaneously different from others and also from the self (regarding Mikhail Epstein’s theory). Drawing upon examples from Fatih Akin’s film *The Edge of Heaven* (2007), two scenarios of *trans-coding* of identity were introduced. First, subversion is conveyed via the representation of ambiguous identities *in-between*, who are in a constant process of ‘becoming’. In such manner, Akin *trans-codes* identity into a processual construction, which transcends cultural differences into a new, ‘third,’ transcultural entity. The second scenario involves the representation of *gender trouble* or ‘queer’ motifs, which functions as a symbolic crossing of boundaries, and subversion of any form of essentialism. Thus, it was concluded that Akin’s cinematic representation of transcultural identities and transcultural dynamics is a critical

discursive strategy, which challenges cultural ‘othering’ and, instead, (re)produces transcultural consciousness. In this sense, the representation of transcultural identities emerges as a central constituent element of transcultural aesthetics and a creative gesture, which *trans-codes* common perceptions of ‘otherness’.

The following case studies analysis of the travelling exhibition *United States of Europe* (2011 – 2013) and the remix project *Remapping Europe* (2013) furthermore proved valid the initial hypothesis that the representation of transcultural identities and transcultural tropes is a *trans-coding* modality of transcultural aesthetics, since it discursively (re)produces transculturation, subverts cultural stereotypes and transcends socio-spatial boundaries between Self and cultural Others. Thus, it can be concluded that the discussed art projects signify the creative employment of *third space* tropes and visual motifs (such as home and senses of belonging, road and migration, migrant flâneurs and urban spaces, romance and cross-cultural encounters, among others), which discursively (re)produce processes of transculturation.

The video installations *Moving Away From Home* (2008) and *Now It was Just Make Believe* (2011) by Maria Lusitano explore the psychological aspects of displacement, living in diaspora and altering perceptions of home and belonging from the perspective of imaginary and lived realities. The multichannel video installation *In the Middle of the Way* (2001 – 2007) by Anna Konik draws a parallel between the artist’s own nomadic life and the existential experiences of several homeless people from different cities across Europe as a reflection on one’s imaginary construction and shifting perceptions of home. The topics of home and belonging reach a further treatment in the video *Interna/Inmate* (María Jesús Valenzuela, 2013) that represents how foreign domestic workers define home within the shifting boundary between memory and lived reality, public and private space. The video reflects on home as a contested space, where employers and domestic workers negotiate socio-spatial boundaries along the divides of class, nationality, ethnicity, as well as socio-spatial hierarchies that render one’s sense for intimacy. Thus, the tropes of home and belonging, as typical transcultural repertoires, are used to represent states of cultural in-betweenness and processes of transculturation.

First Steps (Sorry + Please) (Cedoux Kadima, 2013) and *Helping Others* (Adhurim Demiraj, 2013) treat further the constitution of third spaces of transculturation and transcultural identities by employing the trope of the *migrant flâneur*. The repertoire of the immigrant stroller, which the videos portray, evokes the

ambiguity, the uncertainty, the fluidity of the experiential and spatial construction of identity formation. The state of in-betweenness that the *migrant flâneur* embodies, as being both within and outside of the city dynamics, corresponds to the liminal, intermediate, *third space* of transculturation where cultural differences are negotiated. Thus, the motif of the *migrant flâneur* both represents the perspectives of cultural Others and also potentially disrupts and *trans-codes* audiences' established socio-spatial imagination. Thus, it can be concluded that the representation of streets, public places, urban settings and cityscapes also emerges as a repertoire, which symbolically renders the *contact zone* or the *third space* of potential transculturation between cultural Others and host society.

Furthermore, as the case studies analysis has proven, transcultural aesthetics is also constituted by discursive counter-strategies. For instance, the creative use of borders imagery is a critical discursive approach that evokes a symbolic transcendence of European geo-political frontiers and socio-cultural boundaries. For instance, *Tránsito/Crossing* (David Gallardo, 2013) translates the topic of border crossing into an allegorical tale, which *trans-codes* the *dehumanizing trope* of immigrants' animalisation, while *Dowód/Proof* (Alicja Plachówna-Vasilevska, 2013) explores the border through images of passports, stamps and immigration forms that signify border control and the policing of intimate relations. The live-cinema performance *Eurovisions* aims to transcend borders by employing imagery that represents Europe's migration control apparatus and technologies of surveillance. The non-representation of transcultural identities, such as the enforcement of Us/Them dichotomies in Gerda Lampalzer's video *Thoughts Are Free* (2011) and Anu Pennanen's work *Clean Air* (2004), also functions as a critical discursive counter-strategy, which conceptually provokes the necessity for building cross-cultural understanding and transculturation between Self and cultural Others in European societies.

Overall, it can be concluded that by following similar aesthetics and conceptual concerns, the discussed creative expressions constitute a shared semantic space. The works re-imagine European identities as transcultural entities and Europe as a *real-and-imagined* third space, or creatively reified 'another Europe', which envisages the transcendence of geo-political and socio-cultural boundaries.

7.2 Sampling of cultural codes within a transcultural rhizome of new meanings

The constitution of a transcultural imaginary was also approached as the dynamics between global cultural flows and reverse flows, studied in Arjun Appadurai's thesis on cultural globalization. Furthermore, processes of glocalization (Robertson), appropriation and recontextualization of cultural repertoires (Kroes) were suggested as modalities of *trans-coding* that allow for processes of transculturation. The definition of transcultural imaginary was also related to the continuous potentiality for recombinations of cultural flows. This capacity for constant permutations and realignments was conceptualized through Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic model of culture that envisages transconnections between cultures in a non-hierarchical system. Furthermore, this theory was extended into the observation that processes of transculturation are intrinsically rhizomatic, since they do not structure cultural influences in a hierarchical order, but functions as a network of multiple cultural impulses. Therefore, the transcultural imaginary does not develop from a single cultural origin, but through multiple interconnected cultural attachments.

Within the second chapter these theoretical aspects were projected into the second suggested modality – cross-cultural sampling of signs and repertoires, which performs a *trans-coding* and subversive function. For instance, the sampling of cultural codes into a creative *cut'n'mix* (following Dick Hebdige's rhetoric) can act as an expression of symbolic resistance, as exemplified by the discussed Banksy's critical graffiti on the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe. Moreover, Linda Hutcheon argues that the specific case of parody as a postmodern reuse of references *politicizes* representation and resists the ideology of interpretation, since parody is doubly coded – it both legitimizes, as well as subverts what it parodies. It was also suggested that sampling of cultural repertoires is also a creative gesture, which constitutes a *third space* between cultures, e.g. between European and non-European sentiments as displayed by Fatih Akin's cinematic expression *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005).

While the second modality of sampling repertoires was studied within theoretical perspectives on the aesthetics of remixing, DJing and recycling of media content, or "the death of the author", the third suggested modality of critical media participation focused on "the birth of the reader," as Roland Barthes has positioned the active role of the audience. With this regard, the first chapter tackled the

interconnections between transcultural imaginary and the concepts of cultural citizenship (Nick Stevenson) and critical cosmopolitanism (Gerard Delanty) that emphasize the critical and educative potential of citizens' democratic, media and cultural participation. Drawing upon the positions of Nick Stevenson and Gerard Delanty, Europe was conceptualized as a social space where cosmopolitan imagination can be generated through processes of cultural communication and media participation. Translated into the second chapter, this conceptual background reappeared within the third *trans-coding* modality of critical media participation via *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle of generating new meanings and alternative discourses. According to Hall, messages are constructed as polysemic sign systems that can be interpreted in different ways, while media communication also functions as a circuit reproducing a pattern of domination. Hall's communication theory of encoding/decoding is related to one-way channels of transmission between producers and audiences, such as television. Thus, considering the open-ended character of participatory media (where receivers acts as producers who encode new meanings and construct alternative discourses), it was argued that Hall's model can be re-thought into a chain-system of constant *encoding-decoding-encoding*, characterized by novel generation of meanings at the receiving end. Moreover, it was suggested that the *encoding-decoding-encoding* cycle can serve as a model of critical media participation.

Moreover, Henry Jenkins (2006) recognizes the democratic and deliberative potential of user-generated content, while Nico Carpentier (2011) offers a direct critique on Jenkin's theory by suggesting a distinction of media participation at a structural macro level and content-related participation as a micro practice. In this sense, it was presumed that 'playing' with the medium and generating critical and creative content carries the connotation of an 'active' participation in comparison with other forms of (social) media involvement, where interaction could be reduced to rather 'passive' participatory functions. Thus, it was further proposed that audience 'active' participation with (interactive) creative mediums could enhance critical engagement and facilitation of transcultural processes. Furthermore, the transcendence of semiotic and symbolic material across media platforms could trigger critical and creative *trans-coding*. The theoretical dimensions on critical media participation were exemplified by the transmedia community art initiatives *The Green Screen Diaries* (2015) and *U-CARE: Urban Culture Against Racism in Europe* (2012 – 2014).

The case study analysis of *Remapping Europe – Remix Project* (2013) proved the hypotheses that the aesthetic modalities of sampling repertoires and *encoding-decoding-encoding* of new meanings *trans-code* discursively produced binaries between Self and cultural Others and generate novel semantic interconnections and representations. In both cases, the juxtaposition of existing content creates new connotations and functions as a *trans-coding* practice of subverting negative stereotypes and cultural prejudices.

Remix emerges as a common creative practice of encoding new meanings generates new semantic connections and consequently producing alternative discourses. The mixture of media textures, cross-cultural references in intertextual and intermedial order provides a *third space* of multiplicity of perspectives as emphasized by John Akomfrah's film essay *Handsworth Songs* (1986). In general, it was observed that the critical and creative praxis developed by Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC) re-emerges as a relevant artistic device for deconstructing today's socio-political dynamics and the reproduction of discursive racism across Europe. Moreover, the collective's creative approach has informed the conceptual and methodological framework of the overall *Remapping Europe – Remix project* initiative.

Furthermore, several among the discussed video remixes also indicate that subversive humour performs a *trans-coding* function, since it destabilizes binary opposition between Self and cultural Others. For instance, *ABC PRZEMYTNIKA/A Smuggler's ABC* (Magdalena Kuzar, 2013) subverts notions of border control, surveillance and illegality by offering a YouTube tutorial on smuggling goods across the Polish-Ukrainian border. By sampling two mutually exclusive semantic structures – illegal trafficking and social media exhibitionistic/voyeuristic character – the video emphasizes that subversive humour itself functions as a *trans-coding* mechanism, which can destabilize dominant discourses. In a similar approach, *Me Voy a Bailar Pegao/ I'm Going to Dance Pegao* (Ellavled Alcano, 2013) deconstructs Third World stereotypes by re-contextualizing audio and moving image references into a teleshopping parody. The subversive edge of *Tránsito/Crossing* (David Gallardo, 2013) is deliberately achieved via the employment of the mockumentary (or docucomedy) genre. The mixture of fictional and biographical elements – the protagonists' self-representations and fabricated memories of becoming animals (in order to cross the Spanish border) satirize and destabilize the dehumanizing discursive practice of animal-like representation of immigrants. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sampling of two

mutually exclusive semantic structures into a *carnavalesque* fusion plays a transgressive and a subversive role.

The participatory aspects of our media culture allow for critical media participation via a communicative cycle of *encoding-decoding-encoding* of new meanings at the receiving end as the video remixes and user-generated content within the *Remapping Europe* project point out. Furthermore, the case study analysis exemplifies that *encoding-decoding-encoding* as a mode of critical media participation usually operates simultaneously with sampling and re-contextualization of existing media content. Sampling of cultural repertoires and existing media content have the potential to *trans-code* prevailing imagery and meanings and generate novel semantic interconnections, (self-)representations and alternative to mass media discourses. The creative output within *Remapping Europe* exemplifies that remixing of existing media content (such as film, video and personal archives) functions as a form of symbolic resistance. Still, not any re-combination of references and translation of cultural codes can be addressed as a transcultural aesthetic practice. Rather, transcultural aesthetics, as proposed and studied here, entails the transcendence of cultural boundaries, deconstruction of processes of stereotyping and *de-Orientalization* of the European imaginary from processes of cultural ‘othering’. For instance, EU enlargement *Kill Bill*-like video mixes pre-existing references and contents, however it does not destabilize the discursive binary oppositions between Us and Them, Self and Other. This would further imply that remix can serve as a transcultural aesthetic gesture, only when it subverts binary oppositions, expresses symbolic resistance and establishes a shared semantic space of cross-cultural translation.

Overall, the discussed remix project *Remapping Europe* and the creative approaches within suggest the constitution of a critical and creative cartography, which re-imagines Europe as a space of transcultural co-existence. The aesthetic praxis of sampling cultural repertoires and media references in a non-hierarchical intertextual order also renders Europe’s cultural map as a rhizome of interconnected transcultural attachments.

7.3 Imaginative extension of the Self into cultural Others

The exploration of the conceptualizations of the transcultural imaginary was completed by introducing theoretical perspectives related to processes of non-verbal, experiential

and somatic cultural affiliation via *intermediate spaces* of transculturation between internal and external symbolic structures suggested by Maya Nadig. With this regard, one's capacity of symbolization can be understood in terms of a sensory experience rather than rational language interpretation. Thus, it was concluded that cultural attachment via somatic perception implies that process of transculturation can be also constituted via corporeal experiences. Transculturation has been also outlined within the destabilization of internal and external cultural differences. Kristeva's model of the foreigner was used as the conceptual framework for the imaginative process of displacement and accommodation of difference by imagining the self in the place of the other, supported by the moving-image example of the documentary short *Shipwreck* (Morgan Knibbe, 2014).

In the second chapter, this theoretical stance was translated into the fourth *trans-coding* modality of embodied transculturation. Thus, it has been argued that embodied affiliation with culture emerges as a relevant modality of transcultural aesthetics and creative transcendence of cultural boundaries. Specifically, in the field of media and interactive arts, the artwork has transformed into a communicative process and the aesthetic experience is constituted as an extension of the body, or a process which involves reception with the body itself. The discussion has interconnected two levels of embodied aesthetic experiences – representation of corporeality and affective involvement with the sensory dimensions of (media) artworks. According to Laura Marks, intercultural cinema engages the viewer through haptic visuality, which triggers physical memories of smell, touch and taste. Then, spectatorship is an act of multisensory translation of cultural knowledge. While Marks' study still insists on a representational paradigm, this dissertation supports a beyond representational approach. Then, embodied affiliation with culture is not only the *representation* of corporal referents, but also the *presentation* (in Margaret Morse's terms) of immediate *affective* aesthetic experience of transculturation. In this sense, Suhr and Willerslev claim that disruptive montage plays a role in expanding transcultural perception. Furthermore, it has been argued that the constructivists principles of early Soviet montage, for instance Eisenstein's *intellectual montage* as a generation of new (visual) connotations through combining pre-existing meanings (imagery), can be understood as synonymous to practices of *trans-coding*. Moreover, it could be considered that *intellectual montage*, as a collision of independent shots, has reached its full affective potential in contemporary installation art. Specifically, multi-channel audio-video installations have

unlocked the space for a dialectic relationship between autonomous images and their relational rhythmic and sensory qualities. As a relevant example could be used the double-channel video installation *European Union Mayotte* (2015) by the Danish activists artists collective SUPERFLEX, which exploits the dialogical potential of two screens and the contrapuntal correlation between imagery and sound. Moreover, interactive arts provide the possibilities for embodied identification with others, which Bolter and Grusin have recognized as generation of *virtual empathy* and the ability of the viewer to empathise through imagining. In this sense, it can be assumed that cultural attachments and processes of transculturation could be embodied experiences that have the potential to *trans-code* processes of *othering* at a corporeal level.

The analysis of the investigative art project *The Machine to Be Another* (2014) has proven the hypothesis that embodied transculturation is a *trans-coding* aesthetic modality, which subverts discursively produced categorizations at a somatic and affective level. In comparison with neuroscience experiments (using virtual reality avatars to convey identification with dark-skinned body), *The Machine* offers the opportunity for extension of the self in the body of another, beyond gender, racial, ethnic, cultural difference. *The Machine* potentially plays a subversive role by transgressing the ideological boundaries and hierarchical dichotomies between self and other, mind and body, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, male and female, which Donna Haraway has conceptualised via the metaphor of the *cyborg*. Thus, *The Machine to Be Another* opens the potential to *trans-code* social constructions such as gender and race at a corporeal and sensorial level. Moreover, the experience of multiple and different (cultural) versions of oneself via a variable media work, such as *The Machine to Be Another*, could stimulate one's transcultural awareness and sensitivity.

It can be further concluded that the third space as a socio-spatial triad of *lived*, *perceived* and *conceived* space (Lefebvre) or *real-and-imagined* third space (Soja) corresponds to the socio-spatial constitution of transculturality, also as a cubist-like multiplicity of perspectives (or a *Gesamtkunstwerk* spatial model). Similarly, multi-screen art installations offer a mosaic of multiple (screen) realities. Disruptive montage provokes a similar shift of one's common-sense perception into a multiperspectival and synaesthetic order, which *The Machine* employs within its scenarios for interaction. As Suhr and Willerslev have argued, montage offers a tool to break the mimetic dogma and make invisible social realities visible. Thus, it can be suggested that the destabilization

of common-sense perception could transcend cultural boundaries. The empathic potential of *The Machine to Be Another* can be discovered in the somaesthetic fusion between first-person shooting and subjective camera (as an empathic perspective) and sensorimotor destabilization, which provokes imaginary extension of one's self in multiple versions. Thus, *The Machine* offers a shift from media representation towards media re-enactment and a redefinition of media culture ethics from *regarding the pain of others* into employing a subjective camera for 'becoming' the cultural Other. It can be concluded that the sensorial dimensions of creative expressions (e.g rhythm in music, montage in film) allow for non-narrative and somatic cultural engagement or embodied transculturation, which *trans-codes* discursive categories between Self and cultural Others at a sensory level. Simultaneously, *The Machine* scenarios for interaction evoke that the overlaying of embodied cross-cultural impulses and transculturally encoded narratives could enhance further cross-cultural understanding.

7.4 Transcultural aesthetic praxis – a new paradigm for building cross-cultural understanding in Europe

In conclusion, this dissertation aims to outline and establish a new paradigm, which articulates further the exact creative techniques and strategies, which artists and media makers employ in order to destabilize and overcome processes of *othering* (xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance). The discussed artistic expressions in European context signify the emergence of recurring critical and creative practices, which effectively build dialogical and empathic relationships between Self and cultural Others. The transformative potential of the four suggested *trans-coding* modalities becomes evident within the following classification of transcultural aesthetic strategies, techniques and manifestations:

- 1) Representation of ambiguous identities in-between, including queer motifs and subversion of forms of essentialism. Specifically, the transcultural repertoires of migration, cross-cultural encounters, romance and the policing of intimate relations allow for the redefinition of one's identity into a transcultural entity.
- 2) Employment of *third space* tropes and visual motifs, such as home and homelessness, public/private space dichotomies, streets, roads and cityscapes (including the *migrant flâneur*), borders and control (surveillance cameras,

passports, stamps, forms). For instance, the imagery of boats and the sea is emerging as a visual metaphor for EU's sinking sense of humanity, while the street becomes the *chronotope* of potential transcultural encounters.

- 3) Remix of multiple cultural impulses and references in a rhizomatic and intertextual order that emphasizes cross-cultural permeations and processes of transculturation.
- 4) Use of parody, subversive humour and *carnavalesque* fusion, which do not repeat, but alter the code and thus deconstruct existing meanings and generate novel connotations.
- 5) Do-It-Yourself media and user-generated artistic content, as an expression of the active role of the audience and critical cosmopolitanism.
- 6) Generation of virtual empathy and aesthetic experiences as an extension of the body, which allows for a sensory cross-cultural re-enactment and somatic subversion of binary oppositions rather than rational language interpretation.
- 7) Use of subjective camera as an empathic tool that puts the Self in the place of cultural Others.
- 8) Disruptive montage and cubist-like multiplicity of perspectives (e.g. use of split-screen and multi-screen compositions), which provide multiperspectival and synaesthetic approach towards socio-spatial processes of identification and diverse social realities.

The listed transculturalizing strategies emphasize the emergence of new cultural entities within cross-cultural and creative interaction. Thus, artist, creative thinkers and media makers have expressed critical engagement and have offered aesthetic experiences that re-imagine contemporary Europe as a possible dialogical space of transcultural co-existence, which counteracts dynamics of exclusion and negative 'othering'. Moreover, the complementary and interrelated character of the suggested modalities of critical and creative *trans-coding* and the specific transcultural aesthetic strategies, becomes vital for building cross-cultural understanding in Europe and a shared transcultural European imaginary, which imaginatively extends the Self into cultural Others.

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