

**“EVERYTHING NEW IS BORN ILLEGAL.” –
HISTORICIZING RAPID MIGRATION THROUGH NEW MEDIA PROJECTS**

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This dissertation historicizes the interplay between standardized perception of cross-border movement and the complexity that actually results out of such an approach. A select number of artistic contributions that speak of and for individuals officially identified as “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” and “illegals” on part of governing authorities reflect this interplay. The selected works, namely Christoph Schlingensief’s 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* and Paul Poet’s resulting 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*, Agostino Imondi and Dietmar Ratsch’s 2010 documentary *Neukölln Unlimited*, and Ursula Biemann’s video essays *Contained Mobility* (2004) and *X-Mission* (2008), intervene into the legal identification on part of nation-states through the routine life practices that occur on part of the migrants. While recognizing this process, the new media works challenge us to move away from binary arguments, such as positioning those in control opposite individuals who passively adopt parameters. Instead, they offer a perspective in which individuals caught in rapid migration successfully and productively negotiate their space, ultimately compelling us to move past viewing rapid migration as an exceptional reality.

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PREFACE

My tribe is scattered. Some are still here, and some have left. Some have seen me through every imposing situation, and some have watched more from the side. Each person, however, has truly seen me.

To my sister Angela, thank you for never being afraid to be my mirror. Thank you for the courage and the strength you instill in our family. You have taught me more about myself than I have often realized. You glide elegantly and effortlessly through each obstacle. I am both proud and lucky to have you in my life.

To my mother and to my father, thank you for giving me life. Thank you for my sister. Thank you for your relentless and unwavering courage. Thank you for ceaselessly supporting me in each possible emotional, mental, and physical way. Thank you for always keeping the family together. Thank you for always trying, no matter how difficult things get. Thank you for understanding me.

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INTRODUCTION: *THE DEAD ARE [STILL] COMING*

The think tank Center for Political Beauty (CfPB) claims that in our postmodern day and age, the legacy of the Holocaust is “rendered void by political apathy, the rejection of refugees, and cowardice” (CfPB official website). The antidote, per the Center, for such a critical state is interventional art that “hurt[s], provoke[s], and rise[s] in revolt” to gain the attention of digital media. When the self-proclaimed “assault team” took to the streets in Berlin, Germany in June 2015, it was to stage their latest intervention in such a spirit. Together with over 5,000 protestors who carried self-made crosses and candles, the group transported an empty wooden coffin to the forecourt of Angela Merkel’s Federal Chancellery, temporarily transforming the lawn into a massive symbolic graveyard. In the following weeks, additional coffins appeared in several German cities and in countries such as Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, and Bulgaria while #TheDeadAreComing trended on Twitter (Köhn 3, 21).

Compared to the original strategy, the final execution for the intervention was remarkably tame. It did not reflect the force and urgency the project initially carried. Center for Political Beauty began work on *The Dead Are Coming* in 2014 as a response to the extensive humanitarian consequences of the Syrian civil war. They were particularly interested in what happened to the thousands of bodies of Syrian refugees after the individuals drowned at Europe’s external borders. Members of CfPB first conducted research on the conditions under which the bodies of those who die are treated at the continent’s border regions. Then the center visited

secret mass graves and cooling chambers in Greece and Sicily where they found the dead, anonymously piled up in trash bags. After identifying some of the victims, CfPB contacted relatives with whom they opened the “graves,” exhumed the bodies, and planned reburials for the deceased migrants. According to CfPB, the reburials were to occur in Berlin, as it was the exact place where “the most important decisions against Europe’s humanity are taken” (Köhn 1). The transfer and reburial of the bodies to the German capital was meant to also put an end to the migrants’ journey and to generate attention to the growing humanitarian crisis.

CfPB first organized the burial for a 34-year-old woman from Syria who drowned on the Italian shores. The funeral took place at an Islamic cemetery in Berlin’s southwestern Gatow district. International media covered the event, but the woman’s surviving husband and three children were absent. The family was not allowed to travel to Berlin because they were seeking asylum in Germany, a status that legally prevented them from moving freely between city and regional borders while their applications were still in processing. Two days later, CfPB gave the body of a 60-year-old Syrian man a final resting place, and subsequently called for a “March of the Determined” during which the collective announced their intention to bury the rest of the exhumed bodies right in the open space in front of the Federal Chancellery. The burial ground was then to give way to a memorial “for the victims of Europe’s border policy” (3-4) under a grand arch with the inscription “To the Unknown Immigrants.” The conclusion to the *Dead Are Coming* would therefore remain open-ended, as anyone who would walk over the forecourt, including the German chancellor, the cabinet, other politicians, and visitors, would physically walk over the dead bodies every time they entered and exited the building.

After members of Center for Political Beauty announced their intentions, it caused a stir in the German political and media sphere. While the march portion of the demonstration was

approved, the group was not officially allowed to transport or bury any remains. Instead, the final phase of *The Dead Are Coming* turned into a funeral procession with thousands of demonstrators and a single empty coffin, which temporarily turned the grassy area in front of the Federal Chancellery into a symbolic graveyard.

Both the concept and the evolution of *The Dead Are Coming* raise significant questions regarding migration in the twenty-first century. First, we may look to the catalysts that inspire an intervention such as *The Dead Are Coming*. Why is there such a great influx of refugees from Syria? Which political, economic, and/or environmental developments prompted large numbers of people to intentionally and immediately leave their country of origin for the unknown? One of the main responses to an event that poses danger to one's life is to leave instantly, to seek shelter and/or another environment that eliminates such a threat. At times, the leaving occurs on a greater scale, to the point of crossing, or intending to cross, a nationally defined border.

The second set of questions addresses the variety of consequences following the decision to leave one's country of origin. How and through what means do large numbers of people leave their home country? Why do some not make it? What happens to those who do not? The majority of individuals who left Syria intended to cross the Mediterranean Sea as soon as possible and in any way possible. This resulted in a high number of deaths, many of which occurred on Italian and Greek shores. While this may be common knowledge in news reporting, the fact that the bodies were kept in cooling chambers in Italy and in Greece in the thousands does not make headlines. It is not a popular development because a photograph showing stacked dead bodies recalls images of mass graves, which result mainly from horrific and turbulent large-scale political conflicts.

The third set of questions engages with notions of responsibility towards and representation of migrants. One of the main events as part of *The Dead Are Coming* were the two funerals at an Islamic cemetery in Berlin. Two individuals, one 34-year-old woman and one 60-year-old man, were no longer anonymous dead bodies. Instead, they had names and a final resting place, and with that, the recognition of an identity they once embodied. Is this the type of recognition both would have wanted, however? Was it the responsibility of Center for Political Beauty to arrange the funerals? And in an even broader sense, what kind of responsibility does the receiving country have towards individuals who have crossed its national borders due to fear of persecution, torture, and/or death? As mentioned earlier, the woman's husband and children were unable to attend her funeral. In other words, the family's official status as "asylum seekers" prevented the husband and children from participating in an otherwise routine custom in life. The rapid, unplanned crossing of a nationally defined border results in critical changes of identity, routine life, and in some cases, in a complete loss of both. In this case (and in many others), the changes were out of the individuals' hands, that is, they were not in control of making decisions that directly affect their daily life and their existence as a family. Pointedly stated, fleeing across a nationally defined border without official authorization results in punishment.

Both the political catalysts for the Syrian crisis and the inspired cultural product *The Dead Are Coming* are sobering reminders that even in the twenty-first century, there is no productive way to handle sudden mass movements. If we look to the Center for Political Beauty, their mission clearly identifies both Germany's history and the modern German political system as major adjudicators in determining the rights of migrants globally, whether they are identified as "refugees," "asylum seekers," and/or "illegals." However, the very existence, commitment,

and resources of a think tank such as Center for Political Beauty suggests that Germany, and the greater collective of Europe, is also a space for cultural production that effectively engages with contemporary issues on migration. This is no accident. Specific moments in Germany's sociopolitical history and in cultural production account for the complexity of Germany's role in contemporary global migration.

For example, beginning with the eighteenth century, identity building in the German-speaking territories experienced a dynamic shift during the Age of Absolutism that subsequently carried over into the Age of Enlightenment. In addition to revolutions in religious affiliation – which proved to be the main catalyst in both small- and large-scale migration of people in Absolutist Europe – the construction of ethnicity began to play a large role in the regulation of mutually shared space. The outcome of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 was a complex territorial configuration of over 300 separate German-speaking sovereignties of all kinds and sizes, from countries like Austria and Prussia down to pocket-territories and independent city-states like Hamburg or Frankfurt am Main. At the same time, the Kingdom of Prussia sought to increase German lands beyond these areas, which resulted in a century-long fight for dominance between Austria and Prussia (referred to as *deutscher Dualismus* or *preußisch-österreichischer Dualismus*). This was a highly complicated and volatile set of circumstances. On the one hand, there was a high number of fragmented and independent German-speaking sovereignties, each with its own legislation and constitutional representative. On the other hand, the strongest member in this equation – Prussia – sought to extend that which was already substantially divided.

Cultural production at this time both reflected and responded to this ideological clash by attempting to shape a unified “German” identity in the midst of *Kleinstaaterei* [scattered

regionalism]. At first, the result was another clear division, this time between “natives” and “others,” the latter of which appeared in the form of travelers or migrants that were religiously and ethnically set apart from another character and/or group who claim to be “German” (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Die Juden* [*The Jews*] and *Nathan der Weise* [*Nathan the Wise*]). When we look to artifacts representative of Weimar Classicism, however, another variation appears. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Hermann und Dorothea*, for example, introduces a division among Germans by juxtaposing the “German refugees” west of the Rhine River to *die bürgerliche Idylle* [*middle-class idyll*] of “German natives” to its east. In addition to utilizing religious and ethnic characteristics to identify an “other,” migrants who were fugitives or refugees without a permanent “homeland” also fell into this category – whether they were considered German or not.

In the process of defining the “other,” being “German” and/or “native” was also heavily scrutinized. While literary characters admit with great difficulty and shame to being “German,” political analyses such as Friedrich Carl Moser’s *Von dem deutschen Nationalgeist* [*On the German National Spirit*] condemn all “Germans” as being ignorant of their respective heritage and worse, as being fugitives from their own background. In *Iphigenie auf Tauris* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe challenges the defining characteristics attributed to “native” and “other” by showcasing that *die Fremde* [the foreign (lands)] can become *Vaterland* [fatherland, home country] after a prolonged stay and active engagement with the new culture.

As we see in both *Iphigenie* and Moser’s political writings, *Vaterland* is whichever of these areas one was born and lived in, and “foreign parts” began at its edges. At this time, “Germans” were space-deficient in the tangible and performative sense – their abstract space is neither “national” nor has it yet moved away from the “regional.” While a migrant – the

individual who is actively moving – is profiled ethnically and racially, the “German” is criticized for not migrating enough.

In the transition from empire to nation, the nineteenth century witnessed a radical transformation within the concepts of community and belonging. Experiences of individual and collective displacement became a complex and multi-phasic endeavor that both depended upon and in turn reinforced regional conditions in the political, economic, and cultural sectors. As Robert Lee underscores in his exposition on economic, demographic and social changes in German-speaking territories, the dynamic recalibration of borders continued in the nineteenth century. By 1815 the number of federal states and principalities was reduced from over 300 to 39, and “with few exceptions, there was general support within Germany for the federal idea...in the constitution of 1848-9, at the foundation of the Norddeutsche Bund in 1867, and in the Bismarckian constitution in 1871” (Lee 74-5).

As the German states were territorially moving towards a unified nation, the increasing importance of history as a separate scientific subject and the Romantics’ rediscovery of the German past sought to unite the federal states and principalities intellectually. In *German History since 1800*, Karin Friedrich argues that cultural life after 1850 experienced a certain level of “nationalization” in practice before the formal political unification in 1871. The foundation of German ethnography, national economy, and the beginnings of what were perceived as a common cultural history and sociology greatly contributed to this aspect. She further notes that the visual arts carried the “worship of the whole German nation and its achievements” (103). Statues of “great Germans” in German cities and towns began to appear. On the order of Ludwig I of Bavaria in 1842, the building of the Valhalla was completed to honor German heroes killed in Napoleonic Wars. In a more telling example, Friedrich mentions

the monument of Arminius. Begun in 1841 and finished in the year of the declaration of the German Empire in 1871, it “translated Arminius’ victory over the Romans [in 9 CE] into a German victory over France” (103-4, 111).

Fast forward to today, and we find a Germany that actively participates in contemporary reflections on migration. Overall, at the turn of the twenty-first century, engaging with politics of mobility became a globalized effort as both artists and scholars focused on capturing the contradictions, flexibility, and pluralistic modes in which an exiled person operates. In addition to television projects and traditional documentaries, multi-media endeavors in the form of art happenings, gallery installations, and public interventions directly engaged with illegal migration, or rather, with unexplainable or unclassifiable migration across a national border. Official governmental designations of migrants such as “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “illegal” came under increased scrutiny as artistic practices that engaged with these notions questioned their conceptual basis and lack of humanitarian effectiveness. Responses to issues in migration and to refugee crises became increasingly more intricate as artists and activists in Germany followed developments both within and beyond the country’s borders.

Kein mensch ist illegal [No one is illegal], for example, is a loosely connected international network of antiracist groups and religious asylum initiatives that began in 1997 after the death of Amir Ageeb, a Sudanese asylum seeker who died resisting deportation from Germany at the hands of the German Federal Police. *Kein mensch ist illegal*, or *kmii* as it is often mentioned, strives to represent non-resident immigrants who stay in a country illegally and are at risk of deportation. The network has an active website, which shares information on campaigns and rallies designed to bring wider attention to the situation of refugees. *Kmii* initially began in Germany at the 1997 *documenta X* art exhibition in Kassel but it has since

spread to Canada as *No Person is Illegal*. *Kein mensch ist illegal* is still active, boasting its own logo and an official inaugural manifest from 1997 that begins with a quote from Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel: „Ihr sollt wissen, daß kein Mensch illegal ist. Das ist ein Widerspruch in sich. Menschen können schön sein oder noch schöner. Sie können gerecht sein oder ungerecht. Aber illegal? Wie kann ein Mensch illegal sein?“ [You should know, that no person is illegal. That is a contradiction in and of itself. People can be beautiful or even more beautiful. They can be just or unjust. But illegal? How can a person be illegal?"].

Two additional projects that originated in Germany and that participate in (inter)national debates on migration are Fatih Akin's 2001 documentary *Denk ich an Deutschland – Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* (*If I think of Germany – We have forgotten to return*) and Andreas Vogt's 2004 documentary *Invisible – Illegal in Europa*. Fatih Akin created his work as a contribution to a series of twelve television projects of documentary and semi-documentary nature shot between 1997 and 2004. Although loosely connected, the television projects explore concepts of migration, national belonging, and resulting identity politics in works such as Andreas Kleinert's 1998 *Niemandland* [*No Man's Land*], Peter Patzak's 2001 *Adeus und Goodbye*, and Michael Gutmann's 2004 *Familienreise* [*Family Trip*]. Fatih Akin's own *Denk ich an Deutschland* project takes its name from part of the opening line of Heinrich Heine's 1844 poem "Nachtgedanken" ["Night-thoughts"]: "Denk ich an Deutschland in der Nacht, / Dann bin ich um den Schlaf gebracht" ["As I think of Germany in the night, / All slumber flees from me"]. Heine wrote his twenty-fourth and last poem in the collection entitled *Zeitstücke* ("time pieces" or "pieces of time") as he was living in exile in pre-revolutionary Paris. Whether "Nachtgedanken" may be interpreted as Heine's longing for a return to his home (in the poem he also speaks of not having seen his mother for twelve years and having had many friends and

family members pass away during his absence) or as the writer's restless and sleepless state of mind as a result of the instable and repressive political rule in the German states at the time, one aspect remains clear: *Denk ich an Deutschland* in both the nineteenth and in the twenty-first centuries grapples with the same issues of home and belonging. Akin films his immediate family and his closest group of friends who hail from Greece, Turkey, and Latin America, and repeatedly asks them: "Do you feel German or Greek?" and "Why did you decide to come here?" Akin's approach initiates a set of unpredictable articulations about territory and belonging, prompting Akin to visit and interview members of his extended family in Turkey. Part of the eighteenth-century investigation of "Vaterland" and "Fremde" reappears as first- and second-generation children of migrant workers (in the form of Akin's family and friends) faced the decision of whether to remain where they were brought or to return to a space of photographs and souvenirs.

While Fatih Akin focused on cross-generational life stories that only involve his family as well as the territorial dynamic of Turkey-Germany / Germany-Turkey, the German freelance director, scriptwriter, and producer Andreas Voigt chose a different approach. In *Invisible – Illegal in Europa*, Voigt follows five people – Edita (born in Ecuador), Zakari (a deserted army officer born in Algeria), Malika (born in Chechnya), Oumar (born in Sub-Saharan Africa), and Prince (born in Nigeria) – all of whom have fled from different parts of the world and who are living "illegally" and scattered across Europe. Voigt's narrative includes the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Poland in addition to the countries in which his social actors were born. Furthermore, instead of focusing on cross-generational stories, *Invisible* engages the concepts of borders and boundaries, and the costs at which the expansion of Europe enacts its presence on the individuals living within its borders.

In visual and performance art, the renowned media art festival *transmediale* offered perspectives on global refugee camps that resulted from climate catastrophes in *transmediale.09 DEEP NORTH*. *transmediale* takes place annually for one week in February in Berlin, Germany. It is part of international events such as Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria), Elektra (Montreal, Canada), and Mutek (Mexico City, Mexico), to name just a few. Founded in 1988 as VideoFilmFest, *transmediale* originally began as a side project of the Berlin Berlinale's International Forum of New Cinema whose intention was to offer a platform to electronic media productions not accepted at traditional film festivals such as the Berlinale. Over the course of the late twentieth century, *transmediale* grew in both popularity and scope. In 2002, for example, *transmediale* produced an extensive exhibition that allowed attendees to experience media art spatially while in 2006 the subtitle of the festival changed from "international media art festival" to "festival for art and digital culture," thereby signaling the need to welcome and recognize projects in which art, technology, and the continuously transforming digital age meet the everyday. In 2008, the "transmediale parcours" publication series was launched to reflect upon research, as well as artistic and critical backgrounds behind each festival's theme.

A year later, *transmediale.09 DEEP NORTH* opened under a theme that the organization described as "the crossing of a point of no return akin to the fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago" (*transmediale parcours 2 DEEP NORTH*). In addition to the cultural and social impact of environmental changes, *DEEP NORTH* also focused on understanding the economic conditions under which dominant knowledge infrastructures emerge, and how these are organized, allocated, and distributed as resources and commodities in present time. German artist Hermann Josef Hack (a student of Joseph Beuys), for example, exhibited his piece *Klimaflüchtlingslager* [*World Climate Refugee Camp*], an installation in which he placed approximately 200 small tents

resembling a miniature version of a refugee camp on the square in front of the Brandenburger Tor. The tents were approximately the size of shoe boxes which Hack had painted and labeled with phrases such as “hazard zone,” “refugee republic,” “SOS UNHCR,” “UN-fair,” “ILLEGAL ALIENS,” and “BRote Armee Faktion,” for example. After *transmediale.09 DEEP NORTH, World Climate Refugee Camp* traveled to multiple other destinations, including Weimar, Frankfurt, Bonn, Tenerife (Canary Islands) in 2009, Jena in 2010, Köln in 2011, Athens, Giza, Jerusalem, Paris, and Rome in 2012, as well as to the Westphalian town of Düren in 2014, to name a select few.

In his interview for *transmediale.09*, Hack declared that “the whole world is a climate refugee camp” as he argued that we will continue to witness an increase in refugees. His project reflected his belief as the miniature refugee camps were mobile reminders of an unsolved humanitarian issue. The shoeboxes occupied a select space (at a time) in order to juxtapose the original purpose or representation of the location with the imminent presence of the refugee. The cultural, historical, and social reputation of places such as Athens, Giza, and Jena, for example, stood parallel to the criticism of legal frameworks that define and consequently handle the refugee. Whether it was the failure of the United Nations to provide adequate protection in “UN-fair,” a direct cry for help to the UN Refugee Agency in “SOS UNHCR,” or even a call to more extreme measures on part of the migrants in “BRote Armee Faktion,” from Hack’s project we may infer that the refugee existence may occur anywhere, at any time, no matter the previous history or reputation of the territory on which it happens.

German artists are particularly attentive to the country’s political circumstances and collective political decisions. In the case of cross-border migration, they continuously join in global discussions with their own situational approaches and visual idioms. With the 2015 piece

The Dead Are Coming, Center for Political Beauty linked interventional art, politics, and human rights to gain the attention of all media, including digital, print, and television. Founded in 2008 and based in Berlin, the collective firmly believes that Germany should not only learn from its history but that it must also act in the form of “aggressive humanism.” Part performance pieces, part interventional art works, and part social work, the Center’s own responses set out to fill the vacuum left behind by artists such as Joseph Beuys, Martin Kippenberger, Christoph Schlingensief, and contemporary Spanish concept artist Santiago Sierra, for example. Center for Political Beauty especially gained traction between 2010 and 2015, during which they exhibited works at the Gorki Theater, the 7th Berlin Biennale, and at the nGbK (neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst [New Society for Visual Arts]), among others.

Amongst cultural projects such as *Kein Mensch ist illegal*, *Denk ich an Deutschland*, *Illegal – Invisible in Europa*, *Klimaflüchtlingslager*, and *The Dead Are Coming*, there are a number of additional works that engage with contemporary issues on migration, particularly with systematized parameters on part of government and with how individuals experience these policy mechanisms.

This dissertation historicizes the interplay between standardized perception of cross-border movement and the complexity that actually results out of such an approach. A select number of artistic contributions which speak of and for individuals officially identified as “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” and “illegals” on part of governing authorities reflect this interplay. The selected works, namely Christoph Schlingensief’s 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* and Paul Poet’s resulting 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*, Agostino Imondi and Dietmar Ratsch’s 2010 documentary *Neukölln Unlimited*, and Ursula Biemann’s video essays *Contained Mobility*

(2004) and *X-Mission* (2008), are an intervention into the legal identification on part of nation-states through the routine life practices that occur on part of the migrants.

Chapter 1 identifies the system behind standardized perception of cross-border movement by introducing the concept of statist normativity. Statist normativity is an official, governmentally defined form of existence that is an intrinsic part of modern society. It is essential to recognize how statist normativity came to be. It occurred neither by chance nor by an awareness of what consequences it would ultimately carry. Statist normativity is significantly inherent, to the point where its far-reaching influence escapes recognition, and yet it is the principal approach for how we organize and recognize movement since the middle of the twentieth century.

Chapter 1 examines the construction of statist normativity through an interdisciplinary approach, including economic, historical, legal, and sociological discourses. The discussion begins by recognizing migration as an essential aspect of human behavior whose form and representation have changed throughout centuries. One of the most significant changes in representing and understanding migration occurred after the breakup of empires, where nation-states gave way to new territorial configurations and to a new understanding of (national) borders. Consequently, the making of the nation-state led to new designations of individuals who reside within and outside it, and more importantly, to new designations of the ways in which individuals cross nationally defined borders. To illustrate these new designations, the discussion links the legal history behind definitions of the “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “illegal” to the sociopolitical circumstances in which they originated, including the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the 1951/1967 Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1985 signing of the Schengen Agreement, to name a few. The resulting analysis shows that in the twentieth century,

movement across nationally defined borders became subject to a transnational standard. This codification on part of national governments collapsed the legal and personal identities of individuals who cross a nationally defined border. This collapse is evident symbolically in standardized documents such as the machine-readable passport and the machine-readable visa, for example. The chapter concludes by engaging with specific elements of statist normativity in post-World War II Germany.

Because statist normativity is a comprehensive and oftentimes a highly elusive concept, chapter 2 illustrates it by way of a cultural product. Chapter 2 takes as its focal point Christoph Schlingensief's 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* [*Please love Austria – First Austrian Coalition Week*] and Paul Poet's resulting 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container* [*Foreigners Out! Schlingensief's Container*] as an exposure of statist normativity. The discussion begins by recognizing Christoph Schlingensief's wide-ranging and complex contributions to the art world, from his experimental films such as *Tunguska – Die Kisten sind da!* [*Tunguska – The Crates are Delivered!*] (1984) and The German Trilogy collection (1989-1990) to postdramatic theater pieces such as *Rocky Dutschke '68* (1996) and *Wahlkampfzirkus – Chance 2000* [*Election Campaign Circus – Chance 2000*] (1998). The rationale behind this discussion is twofold. First, an overview of Schlingensief's films, theater projects, and art happenings reveals his exhaustive knowledge and acute awareness of German sociopolitical history. Second, it proves that Schlingensief's blunt, satirical exaggerations and blatant disparagement of cultural norms successfully expose significant issues at the time. The chapter then moves to a description and analysis of a select number of scenes in the postdramatic happening *Bitte liebt Österreich* by way of the documentary *Foreigners Out!* The examination ultimately shows that by overidentifying

with the power discourse, consequently producing what he termed as “Widersprüchlichkeit” [contrariness], and allowing it to play out without any type of protocol among the public, Schlingensief confirmed the asylum seeker’s state-codified reality – statist normativity – at the turn of the new millennium.

Chapter 3 introduces the concept of dis-identification through Agostino Imondi and Dietmar Ratsch’s 2010 documentary *Neukölln Unlimited*. Dis-identification is a direct and successful challenge of officially assigned parameters under statist normativity. The 2010 documentary *Neukölln Unlimited* presents dis-identification in scenes that show the juxtaposition of officially assigned parameters by the state and the autonomous negotiation on part of those who have been assigned this official status. The scenes include habitual events such as going to school, working, traveling, and spending time with family and friends. Activities such as obtaining good grades, having a job or multiple jobs that bring in a certain amount of money, and planning for a life beyond K-12 education carry greater weight because these exact activities – and more importantly, their outcome – play a significant role in determining the subsequent phase of the social actors’ lives. The chapter charts the history of the documentary film, with a focus on its ideological and technological advancements. After discussing the fly-on-the-wall and expository/essayistic documentary approaches, subsequent scene analyses capture the complex negotiation between the officially assigned parameters by the state and the autonomous negotiation of survival in both the tangible and social sense on part of the assignee. Thus, the personal, everyday identity in *Neukölln Unlimited* - and as such, in the actual lives of the Akkouch family - is a specific, productive self that functions successfully on a daily basis. It overshadows the inexact, limiting language of what a “refugee,” an “asylum seeker,” and/or an “illegal” is officially. By showing how members of the Akkouch family actively negotiate the

official social and political assignments of the state, *Neukölln Unlimited* disidentifies Hassan, Lial, and Maradona as abject, voiceless victims of the state.

Chapters 2 and 3, through their discussions of the postdramatic happening, as seen in *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*, and the fly-on-the-wall and expository/essayistic documentary approaches, as seen in *Neukölln Unlimited*, focus on the continual interaction between migration control and the needs of the migrant. Neither work provides a clear outcome nor a definite solution as the focus is precisely on that which the migrant experiences: an in-flux existence and a steady negotiation of official parameters resulting in moments of discernable identity. Pointedly stated, *Ausländer Raus!* and *Neukölln Unlimited* undermine fixity assigned by the nation-state and its geopolitical bodies to reveal a significantly more intricate network of exchanges between individual adaptability and national authority, between the restrictions of federally issued documents and the way human agency transforms these limits into effective habitation practices.

Chapter 4 introduces the concept of critical knowledgescapes in the works of Ursula Biemann as a response to statist normativity. A critical knowledgescape is a conceptual framework with which to closely engage with and analyze complex aesthetic products. A critical knowledgescape is not a linear argument but a terrain of thought. In the case of Ursula Biemann's work, for example, the critical knowledgescape rendered includes multi layered and synthetic soundscapes, asynchronous sound-image relations, intellectual montage, and textual as well as graphic overlays in a single frame that often re-signify known information. Biemann deploys three elements in her work as part of critical knowledgescapes. First, Biemann engages genre strategies of the essay film. Second, Biemann develops the cultural-anthropologically

inspired concept of “knowledgescapes.” Third, Biemann’s works include compelling representations of discourses in critical geography.

To better illustrate each matter, the chapter first engages with the essay film, with knowledgescapes, and with elements of critical geographies in greater detail and with examples from four film essays by Biemann’s, namely *Performing the Border* (1999), *Remote Sensing* (2001), *Europlex* (2003), and *Black Sea Files* (2005). Although one or more films demonstrates each element, the pairings are not mutually exclusive and may be combined differently. Like Hans-Thies Lehmann’s postdramatic theater devices in Christoph Schlingensiefel’s happening *Ausländer Raus!*, genre strategies of the essay film, knowledgescapes, and characteristics of critical geographies overlap and are best conceived as constantly interacting with one another.

After discussing each of these three elements in sequence with examples in Biemann’s work, the chapter then focuses in greater depth on *Contained Mobility* (2004) and *X-Mission* (2008) through the concept of critical knowledgescapes. The analysis of both film essays shows that Biemann’s aesthetic approaches first display an acute awareness of both the socio-political circumstances influencing the social actors and of how their legal and personal identities are constructed and represented through film. *Contained Mobility* and *X-Mission* also convey an understanding of dynamic temporality, a creative representation of knowledge transfer, an understanding of space as a socio-cultural process, and an awareness of power trajectories in all three, that is, in time, space, and the creative representation of knowledge transfer. Ultimately, the two film essays provide a new acoustic, textual, and visual form to longstanding perspectives on individuals labeled as “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” and “illegals.”

1.0 STATIST NORMATIVITY IN THE LATE 20TH AND EARLY 21ST CENTURIES

Migration is an essential characteristic of humankind. It is a habitual and comprehensive mode of human behavior that permeates multiple aspects of everyday life and helps define social existence. The emergence and behavior of homo sapiens in approximately the last 100.000 years of human evolution indicates that modern humans “have always been a migratory species as far as geography and ecology permits” (de Knijff 39). Even the transition from a mobile hunter-gatherer lifestyle towards predominantly “stationary farming-based societies” over the last 10.000 years “should be seen as the exception rather than the rule” (39). The capability of physically moving from one place to another has been and is present for as long as human beings have existed.

Although migration has been an inseparable part of human existence, its form and frequency have changed over the course of history. For example, the beginnings of European expansion from the sixteenth century as well as the Industrial Revolution three hundred years later reflect a specific degree and dynamic of rapid migratory flows. Both instances set in motion massive transfers of population from rural to urban areas within and across borders. After the breakup of empires, in particular between 1846 and 1939, approximately 59 million people left Europe and the former Soviet Union, mainly for locations in North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (Stalker 9). The period between 1850 and 1914 is perceived (largely by Western scholars) as a time of transatlantic migration while long-

distance movements began “after 1945 and expanded from the 1980s to involve all regions of the world” (Castles, de Haas, and Miller, *Introduction*).

However, large-scale movements following the breakup of empires, the period of transatlantic migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and continual long-distance movements that began in the mid-twentieth century do not reflect an increase in migration. In fact, global migration rates have remained “relatively stable” over the past one hundred and fifty years (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 1, 15, and 216). Why is there such a national and international preoccupation with cross-border movement then? If an activity such as moving from one place to another is an essential characteristic of humankind, why is migration such a hot-button issue?

The answer to this begins with the exceptional historical moment when empires gave way to nation-states. The fall of the Austrian, Ottoman, German, and Russian empires in the late nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries brought a foundational change in the status of the border. The post-imperial emergence and standardization of national borders in the early twentieth century gave way to fixed notions of self-governance. An aspect of self-governance included intensive bilateral, regional, and international treaties seeking to regulate *immigration*, the process of moving to and settling in a country. Self-governance reflected a turn inward for nation-states as governments sought to identify clearly the territory and the people within constructed borders. Consequently, a move across national boundaries into newly identified terrain took on new meaning. Controlling what now became movement across an official national border included a reevaluation of already available symbolic elements and the implementation of new regulations. While nation-states absorbed already available attributes

such as “migrant” and “refugee,” both terms took on different valences with the official addition of “asylum seeker” and “illegal” in modern discursive construction.

Beginning with the second half of the twentieth century, technological advancements that recorded cross-border movements grew increasingly more sophisticated. Tangible, symbolic elements such as a standard machine-readable passport and/or a machine-readable visa with an identifying number and a photograph seek to authenticate a migrant’s existence. A passport and/or a visa first predetermine the timeframe and the way an individual will cross a border into a different country. They also outline various permissions to which the migrant must adhere – parameters that control for how long the individual may stay, whether the person may obtain employment in the country of arrival, and so on. Thus, specifically (re)defined titles such as “migrant,” “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “illegal” grew into a standard used to signify individuals who cross a national border. These terms became the principal categories in characterizing popular opinion of migrants, ushering in a new era of “us” versus “them” and of “familiarity” versus “otherness,” ultimately fueling split intellectual, political, and public perceptions of migration.

The timeframe after the fall of the Austrian, German, Ottoman, and Russian empires, specifically the second half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, is a period of statist normativity. Three characteristics comprise statist normativity. One, it is the result of bilateral agreements that seek to regulate migration. Two, statist normativity employs an official, fixed hierarchy in the commercial, legal, and/or political sectors. The hierarchy comes in the form of officially assigned titles and residence permits, such as “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” “permanent resident,” “tourist on an extended visa,” and so on. The titles and permits determine a migrant’s routine existence. For example, an individual in possession of a work

permit has more flexibility than an individual has on a tourist visa, while a tourist has official documentation and rights than someone identified as an “illegal” may not have. Three, statist normativity employs modern technology to reinforce the previous two characteristics, namely bilateral agreements and an official, fixed hierarchy. For example, nationally implemented elements such as nighttime surveillance cameras at border regions and satellite-guided imaging of commercial shipping containers are in place to monitor border crossing deemed as officially “illegal.” In the same way, machine-readable passports and visas establish a path of documentation that records and determines when, how, and to what extent an individual is to cross a nationally defined border.

Statist normativity is a process that collapses personal and legal identities. While an individual may not personally identify with the official legal designation that is her/his passport or residence permit, for example, the legal designation largely decides how s/he is to function in society. Routine processes such as buying a house, registering for school, obtaining a driver’s license, as well as more significant milestones such as building a career and growing a family, for example, are all venues in which one exercises personal aspects of one’s life. However, it becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible if one’s legal identity does not officially allow these processes to materialize.

Statist normativity is an intrinsic part of our modern society. To comprehend and possibly to streamline large-scale migrations, nation-states in the latter part of the twentieth century instituted a standard, bilateral framework for perceiving and recording movement. However, as migration is oftentimes an unpredictable and active process, it resists a comprehensive grasp. The desire to standardize the perception of movement across national borders clashes with migration’s inherent elusiveness. This tension is especially evident in

(re)defined titles such as “migrant,” “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “illegal” as these attributes do not practically and finally qualify individuals who are crossing nationally standardized borders. The term “refugee,” for example, contains a significant level of ambiguity that in turn leaves the interpretation of refugee laws to those performing the actual designation. International refugee law is grossly inadequate and ill-equipped to deal with the “complexities and diversities of modern refugees’ problems” as it fails to cover “wide-ranging refugee-producing circumstances” which in turn “underscores the need for further evolution” (Islam 14). Because of this inadequacy, the official perception and definition of refugees oftentimes regresses to one of weakness and/or victimhood.

This chapter offers a narrative in how the period after the fall of empires led to our contemporary perspectives on migration. Following the Second World War, several elements contributed to the deliberate abstraction, and in some cases, to the complete erasure of migrants’ personal, lived experiences as we have seen in works such as *Invisible-Illegal in Europa* and *The Dead Are Coming*, for example. This did not happen by accident. Instead, a specific set of occurrences and decisions coalesced to form a new stage of governmentality in the form of statist normativity. The chapter examines this set of occurrences through an interdisciplinary approach, including economic, historical, legal, and sociological discourses. To illustrate the new stage of governmentality, the chapter links the legal history behind definitions of the “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “illegal” to the sociopolitical circumstances in which they originated, including the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the 1951/1967 Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1985 signing of the Schengen Agreement, to name a few. The resulting analysis shows that in the twentieth century, movement across nationally defined borders became subject to a transnational standard. This codification on part of national governments collapsed the legal and

personal identities of individuals who cross a nationally defined border. This collapse is evident symbolically in standardized documents such as the machine-readable passport and the machine-readable visa, for example.

The discussion concludes with Germany as a pivotal case study in late 20th century migration. Germany's own process of unification as well as the country's historical role in unleashing and experiencing waves of population movement allow us to examine statist normativity further. As I examine post-World War Two German refugees, asylum and citizenship parameters of Germany's Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), post-World War Two labor treaties and the influx of more international refugees at the end of the 20th century, I claim that German citizenship laws are formulated in relationship to a notion of refuge.

1.1 THE BEGINNINGS OF STATIST NORMATIVITY

1.1.1 Migration as a continuous weakness

At the European Population Conference in Geneva in 1993, the Dutch Social Democrat Jan Pronk pointed out that there is no “intrinsic reason” why migration, a “perfectly natural human activity of all times and places,” should therefore stir up concern (Pronk 323). Pronk goes on to emphasize that one of the most “concerning” or “feared” types of migration is international migration, which “is only international by virtue of the existence of manmade national boundaries” (323). In fact, migrants are “a symptom of change rather than its cause” (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 19), and yet, “in the perception of many Europeans, migrants...are acquiring a nuisance value” (Pronk 324). Social historians Jan and Leo Lucassen as well as world historian

Patrick Manning carry this through seventeen years later by describing the “consequences and reactions” of “human geographical mobility.” They argue that modern migrants largely appear in the form of “boat refugees from Africa, dead bodies washed up on Mediterranean shores, Chinese peasants in Shanghai, ...Filipino servants and nannies in Rome and Dubai, Mexicans illegally crossing the border of the United States, Polish and Romanian workers all over Western Europe and Chinese mainland brides in Taiwan, to mention just a few examples” (Lucassen and Manning 3-4). These examples are alarming. A large portion of the migrant experience is reduced to a specific socioeconomic workforce, the act of illegally crossing a border, and the visual of dead bodies spanning coasts that comprise an entire sea. The characteristic representation and therefore the perceived position of the migrant in the twenty-first century is one of defeat and weakness.

Such an appraisal is nothing new. In his contribution to the 2012 work *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, historian and specialist in medieval studies Stefan Donecker observes that the act of migration has been a constant polar division between the perceived “godless vagabonds” and “valiant pioneers” between the 15th and 17th centuries (Donecker 232). Throughout the sixteenth century, according to Donecker, historians went as far as condemning the act of migration as the “Curse of Cain” (232-3). This dichotomy between familiarity and otherness, however, occurred in even earlier times. In “The Discursive Construction of Migrants and Migration,” historian of the Migration Period and the Early Middle Ages Walter Pohl and distinguished linguist Ruth Wodak argue that twenty-first century debates on human mobility rely on historical arguments articulated in derogatory language of migration that had begun to develop in classical antiquity (Pohl and Wodak 206). In fact, the “*longue durée* of our discourse on migration may seem striking” (Pohl and Wodak 207, emphasis authors’ own)

when we look to the collective actors and events that have left a lasting impression on the “Western imagination.” Groups such as “Vandals, Huns, Goths, Burgundians, and Lombards” all quickly disappeared from the map of post-Roman Europe, but the “names remained on the agenda, both as resources of identification and as negative stereotypes” (Pohl and Wodak 207). As Patrick Geary further explicates in his 2002 work *The myth of nations – The medieval origins of Europe*, contemporaries observing migrations that occurred during the fourth to sixth centuries of the Common Era used ethnonyms to describe migrant groups. The classical civilization distinguished itself from its “barbarian” neighbors as Greeks and Romans identified themselves as “citizens” belonging to a “populous,” while “foreigners,” on the other hand, were seen as constituted by their ethnic origin and biological bonds. As Pohl and Wodak concisely state, “culture was pitched against nature” (Pohl and Wodak 211).

1.1.2 Migrant ↔ Refugee ↔ Asylum seeker ↔ Illegal

“Migrant” is one of the most widely used expressions denoting an individual who moves from one place to another. It is a comprehensive and a highly adaptable term. The term “migration” is derived from the Latin “migratio,” which means “to move” or “to wander.” In its linguistic roots, therefore, the Latin terms “migrare” and “migratio” refer only to the bodily movement of an individual that results in a change of physical location. They do not specify characteristics such as national identity, the migrant’s background, or even the concept of a national border. In modern usage, however, “migration” and its linguistic relatives describe “a permanent change of residence... *more usually* defined as a permanent or semi-permanent move from one part of a country to another or from one country to another” (Westin, “Migrant,” my emphasis).

In their most recent edition of *The Age of Migration*, Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller underscore that migrants are “classified according to the grounds upon which *residence permits* are issued. *Only those with legal residence status are counted*” (266-7, my emphasis). According to this definition, only officially documented individuals who are residing as such in their country of arrival are considered “migrants.” Castles and Miller continue: “Those not registered as residents are foreigners on temporary visits ... [such as] asylum seekers whose applications are being processed, seasonal workers, and artistes on tour. A third category appears with illegal or undocumented migrants whose status in the country is not officially accepted.”

In active usage, “migrant” and “migration” are typically synonymous with a physical move across a preconceived border. The invocation of nation-states consequently points to officially confirmed boundaries that serve to, among other things, establish relationships between different levels of belonging, pointedly stated: documented versus undocumented. In fact, “migrant” and “migration” are incomplete without at least a mention of the crossing of state boundaries as well as the prerequisites and consequences that form such an event.

One significant characteristic that identifies an individual crossing a border is her/his documented identity. A person who obtains any type of a governmentally sanctioned residence permit (such as a visa, for example) officially exists. In other words, the sociopolitical network and its corresponding representatives (such as an embassy or a consulate, for example) in the receiving country issue written permission for a person to “legally” cross a border. This written document is part of a larger process that enables an immigrant to function officially in the country of destination. Administrative bodies on both the local and national levels recognize and

therefore support the documented individual's daily routine (which may appear in the form of registering for school, renting an apartment, etc.).

Those who do not possess official permission to emigrate, and more importantly, to immigrate into the receiving country are identified as "illegal." The phrases "illegal immigrant" and "illegal alien" denote an individual whose "status in the country is not officially accepted" (Westin, "Migrant"). The "illegal" designation therefore appears as a consequence of a physical move across a national border without official permission of the receiving country's immigration authorities. The lack of an administratively authorized residence permit converts an individual's once accepted presence in the sending country into an official non-existence in the receiving nation-state. An individual who is described as "crossing a...frontier in a fraudulent fashion or at an unauthorized point" (Bracalenti, "Illegal Alien") receives no formal and/or sanctioned administrative support on the local and national level.

The designation of "illegal" often appears as the reflection of "discrepancies between controls in the country of destination and the needs of the migrant" (*Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* 144). It is usually the consequence of the limits imposed on immigrants in the country of destination. Even if an individual obtains official permission to enter a nation-state, s/he is often obligated to conform to certain requirements or possess specific documents – such as a VISA, a specific occupational profile, proof of psychological and physical fitness, certification of knowledge of the language, etc. – which may be difficult to fulfill. As we may observe, the definition of an "illegal" migrant solely relies on the establishment of standardized legal and political parameters across nation-states. On the one hand, it is a general definition that may observe a wide-ranging number of scenarios, but on the other, it may carry consequences

for the individual that are too debilitating to be left up to sociopolitical, one-sided interpretation of standards.

Another designation that further underscores the interplay between normative parameters and the active practice of migration is the term refugee. “Refugee” comes from the Latin “refugium,” which is a derivative of “refugere,” meaning “to flee away.” It refers to a person involuntarily displaced from her or his homeland. While the modern usage of “migrant” also recognizes the existence of a nationally defined border, the concept of the “refugee” presupposes an imminent threat in the form of a natural catastrophe, war and/or military occupation, or fear of religious, racial or political persecution. “Refugee” is a term that is closely bound to time as well as to the evolving concept of the nation-state. It denotes a level of urgency further marked with socio-political developments that have sparked such an immediacy in the first place. Nevertheless, the actions undertaken by a “refugee,” such as the movement across borders and the possibility of settling in a new country are shared traits of the “migrant.”

In his contribution to the work *An Introduction to International Refugee Law*, Professor of Law Muhammad Rafiqul Islam stresses that historically, “the right of people to move across the boundaries of their body politic or political entity is regarded as one of the most ancient exercises of human freedom” (Islam 13). However, when a person is forced to flee her/his state of origin or nationality as a victim of circumstances caused by certain extraneous factors and seeks sanctuary in a foreign country, “s/he is considered as an involuntary migrant or asylum-seeker who does not currently receive the legal protection of any state.” In other words, such an individual has always been in a vulnerable position warranting support and protection – both of which remain largely beyond the person’s control.

Until the emergence of fixed and closed boundaries in the 19th century, refugees “were always absorbed by neighboring countries” (Humburg, *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity & Culture*). In the early twentieth century prior to the First World War, customary international law afforded protection to the individual only by the state to which they belong as a national. The forcible cross-border movement of people took a “dramatic turn at the aftermath of the First World War” (Islam 13), which consequently prompted a discussion on international refugee law as a means of institutionalizing societal concerns for the well-being and protection of refugees. The aim was to safeguard otherwise powerless and vulnerable individuals who “should be entitled to adequate protection beyond the whims of their state of refuge” (14). From the very beginning however, *international* refugee law was Euro-centric – “[p]redominantly European states designed international legal standards” that were to decide the economic and sociopolitical position of displaced people. Furthermore, the law was reactive in the sense that nation-states concluded multilateral treaties concerning the protection of refugees as they emerged (14-15). The first major refugee crisis of the twentieth century occurred in 1917 immediately after the Russian Revolution, during which approximately one and a half million people moved across borders rapidly and without travel documents.

Both the increasing number of political conflicts and the resulting waves of displaced persons in the twentieth century prompted several reevaluations of what it means to be a refugee as well as a number of attempts at providing international protection. As a response to the high number of refugees after the Russian Revolution, in 1922 Fridtjof Nansen of the League of Nations created a League of Nations passport to one, officially provide identity to those who fled, and two, to allow the refugees to move freely across boundaries. Refugee status at that time meant both involuntary departure *and* asylum sought in another country.

With the rise of fascist governments in the 1930s, however, the definition of “refugee” expanded to include persons with a well-founded fear of persecution because of ethnicity, religion, nationality, group membership, or political opinion. During the rise of the National Socialist Party in Germany, the “international community [developed] a Convention Regarding the Status of Refugees Coming from Germany in 1938.” This initiative sought to hold the government of the refugee-producing state accountable for creating a hostile environment. The 1938 convention was followed by an emerging trend “to conceive refugee as an individual person with their own incompatibility with the government,” rather than as a member of a group that was denied protection (Islam 16-20). Following the Second World War, the UN General Assembly established the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in 1947. The IRO focused the definition of the “refugee” around the existence of persecution and recognized that individuals may have valid objections to returning to their state of origin for the continued fear of maltreatment because of their attributes of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion.

Although the IRO began to operate successfully, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) superseded the organization in 1950 per the request of a number of “influential countries...[who] favored the establishment of a UN refugee agency” (18). The resulting 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was the first attempt at a “comprehensive international legal structure for the protection of refugees” (22). However, the document contained two clauses that are worth noting. First, the notion of the refugee had a time limitation. In 1951 and on, the term “refugee” shall apply to any person who has acted under a “well-founded fear of persecution...in Europe or elsewhere *before* January 1 1951” (Article 1A, my emphasis). This portion ensured that the vast majority of signatory states were concerned “to limit their obligations towards those refugees who had already been accepted into their

territories” (Islam 20-21). The 1951 Convention also underscored the prerequisite of a “well-founded fear of persecution” but failed to both specifically define how such a subjective determination were to be made and to ensure the creation (or at least the mention/planning) of an impartial third body to make such a decision. The overall concept did not change – the determination of refugee status remained a process that involved human beings in great distress. However, now an individual must prove that s/he has a real fear of persecution and “it must be reasonable to inculcate such a fear” (Islam 22, Bhuiyan 50-59). These conditions narrowed down the obligation of nation-states to both accept refugees and provide protection. Furthermore, as Islam points out, determining a “well-founded fear of persecution” involves a “prediction-based decision” to be made as to what may happen to the individual if s/he were to return to her/his country of origin.

The 1951 Convention was purposeful in that it clearly recognized the urgent need to provide a legal foundation for the protection of refugees. Under the provision of *non refoulement*, it also ensured that no contracting state may expel a refugee (back) to a territory where her/his life would be threatened on the account of her/his race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular group or political opinion (Article 33 of Convention). For an aspect such as non refoulement to apply, however, a refugee must have still satisfied the aforementioned timeline and s/he must have proven a well-founded fear of persecution. As Islam argues, such a “narrow yet flexible conceptualization of refugee status...created immense state discretion in accepting individuals as refugees and ensuring their protection” (24). The UNHCR recognized the convention’s contradictory stipulations and issued an amended document in the form of the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees that eliminated both the time and geographic limitations. Nonetheless, the removal of temporal and geographic restrictions

amended only Article 1, but left Articles 2 through 34 intact. What this meant is that while the words “on or before January 1, 1951” disappeared, assigning a person refugee status was still based upon “feared persecution as a result of events similar to those occurred in Europe in the 1940s” (24). It is of course sensible to reference occurrences in World War II that may aid in identifying circumstances of physical peril and emotional distress. However, as other political conflicts developed in the twentieth century, relying on both inexact legal language (“events *similar* to those.”) and on one specific conflict system is both incomplete and highly limiting. As both the volume, frequency, and reasoning behind waves of refugees increases, it is no longer productive to refer back to only a specific time in history in order to inculcate a “well-founded fear of persecution.” The basis for fulfilling such a definition continues to be steeped in a specific chronological blueprint, thereby directly hindering a proactive approach to the legal protection of refugees.

Such hesitancy in articulating transparent protection for individuals whose lives are in immediate danger exacerbated the situation further to the point where another signifier arose in respect to those seeking refuge. “An immigrant, legal, or illegal,” who is seeking to “take advantage of the [aforementioned 1951] UN Convention” in order to claim residence in the country to which s/he has come was to be referred to as an “asylum seeker” (*Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought*). Alternatively, an “asylum seeker” is an individual who has applied for asylum in a “country not their own” and who is awaiting “the determination of her or his status as a refugee” (*Dictionary of Politics and Government*).

The immediacy of natural disasters, wars, or persecution based on ethnicity, religion, nationality, group membership, or political opinion, produces both “refugees” and “asylum seekers.” However, an “asylum seeker” carries and therefore directly represents consequences of

the 1951 UN Convention. While the refugee is primarily associated with the initial act of fleeing and subsequent crossing of a border, the asylum seeker has already completed that step and is requesting official permission to remain in the country of arrival (most likely while in the process of proving a “well-founded fear of persecution”). Furthermore, the attribution of the phrase “legal or illegal immigrant” to an asylum seeker further complicates the perception of those who had to cross a national border rapidly and without the means to complete any type of due process put forth by the receiving country. If refugees seeking short- and/or long-term asylum may be described as “illegal,” that is, lacking “official permission of the receiving country’s immigration authorities,” where is the relevance of international protection under the UN Conventions?

At this moment, we may draw out four crucial points from the preceding discussion. One, historically, migrants do not occupy a positive position in state regulation nor in the national popular imaginary. The applied dichotomy of “familiarity” vs. “otherness” in fact becomes more apparent when we look to the history of migration. Two, migration, one of “the most ancient exercises of human freedom” (Islam 13), attained a complex, multi-tiered system of qualification in the second half of the twentieth century. Three, a specific, internationally perceived body – the United Nations – implemented this system. Four, the system for identifying and regulating the “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “illegal” is both reactive and reductive. The phrase “proving a well-founded fear of execution” is general and highly subjective language that is part of the 1951/1967 Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees. If a bilateral, legal document provides inexact guidelines for deciding the status of a migrant, then the process will inevitably result in multiple interpretations.

The designations of “illegal,” “refugee,” and “asylum seeker” are the results of international law in response to great political upheavals following the Second World War. As we may observe however, translating a system of international legal protection into practice faces a complex and, as Islam argues, an “insurmountable [set of] practical and legal barriers in receiving the intended protection” (14). The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees was the second, and so far, the final document of its kind. In other words, the international legal framework put into place since the 1967 Protocol has been static although “refugee-producing events since 1967 have altered radically” (29). Instances of forced exodus of people fleeing their own country for fears of minority oppression, depopulation (ethnic cleansing), repopulation (transplanting), and numerous other violent tactics of territorial claims and occupation have increased in both complexity and frequency that were not anticipated in 1951 or in 1967 (29-30, 32, 34). Events such as large scale outflows of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees in the 1970s and 1980s, the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1991), the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), millions fleeing the Balkan wars in the 1990s, armed conflicts in Sudan (2004-2010), Iraq (2003-2011), Afghanistan (2001-2014), and Syria (2011-present), to name just a few, widened an already present gulf between theory and practice in recognizing and protecting the refugee. In the absence of another comprehensive international protocol, constituents such as UN General Assembly declarations and humanitarian refugee agencies provided “piece meal” procedures specifying conduct of states towards refugees. The significance of this is that contracting states may still determine their own specific approach in the reasoning and manner of accepting those fleeing across national borders. In order to more productively engage with this complex effect, I will now turn to a limited, yet distinctive set of historical events that directly impacted the same European nation-states responsible for defining the “illegal,” “refugee,” and “asylum seeker.”

1.1.3 European-specific catalysts

In 1945, the governments of the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, and the Provisional Government of the French Republic “assume[d] supreme authority with respect to Germany, including all powers possessed by the German Government, the High Command, and any state, municipal, or local government or authority” (official declaration). The middle of the twentieth century, however, marked not only the official end of the Second World War and the geographical and socioeconomic dismantling of Germany. Following Germany’s capitulation, West European nation-states that were formed as a result of fragmented empires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries entered another significant period of geographical and, more importantly, ideological transformation. The changes that ensued would not appear immediately, instead, it was a gradual, yet steady process that strove to unify a very specific type of Europe.

In 1957, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany met in Rome and signed a treaty that intended to “establish the foundations of an even closer union among the European peoples” (Greenwood Encyclopedia of International Relations). Known as the “Treaty of Rome,” this document set up the European Atomic Energy Commission (EURATOM) and the European Economic Commission (EEC). In addition to EURATOM and the EEC, the treaty instituted four major organs, including the European Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. The European Commission had a short life span, as its attempts to exercise a high degree of supranational control and integration into the newly conceptualized European community quickly went awry.

France boycotted the organ for seven months in 1965, prompting the Council of Ministers to take the European Commission over.

The Treaty of Rome attempted to foster a regulated environment. A territorially divided Europe that experienced years of inconceivable hardship and destruction in the latest international conflict needed to display at least a moderate level of collaboration to the rest of the world. The rifts soon became apparent, however, as within the first decade one of the original signees boycotted the very concept they helped create. The degree of “supranational control” the European Commission attempted to enforce upon the member states did not only alienate the national government of France. More importantly, it displayed an alarmingly unexpected level of discord. “Establishing...an even closer union among the European peoples” presupposed two crucial aspects. One, the language indicated that there, in fact, was already a “close union” among the national populations in Europe and that the Treaty of Rome was only going to further such a relationship. Two, verbally calling for a union among “European peoples” and not among European “nations” or “nation-states” introduces an interpersonal relationship to an otherwise federal configuration. And, if, in fact, such an arrangement is hypothetically realized, who decides on the definition of “European peoples”? The inclusive generality of a term such as “people” does not stipulate any hierarchical divisions: are immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, both legal and illegal, included? Or does the term “European peoples” apply solely to those holding citizenship in one of the participating countries in the Treaty of Rome?

Answering these inquiries is secondary, however, to recognizing the inherent, disguised change to significations such as “migration” and “people.” Migration is one of the defining modes of social existence and it therefore resists physical as well as rational restraint. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, migration became the focal point of precisely such an

approach in the late twentieth century, namely the desire to regulate the movement of people based on standardized parameters. In one of the first international treaties following the Second World War such as the Treaty of Rome, theoretically it was argued that a union among the “people” of Europe was the ultimate goal. Yet within the first eight years, the agreement within the official union that held itself responsible for such an endeavor failed when France boycotted the European Commission. The absorption of the European Commission by the Council of Ministers augmented the latter’s power, eventually leading to “increased consultative rights and powers of recommendation within the European Community.” Similar to the repetitive annexation of one national power over another, the officially established organs by the Treaty of Rome paralleled such federal conduct within their newly created union.

While the Council of Ministers continued to “ache to become a true parliament for Europe and...pushed for an enlarged role based on its claims of democratic legitimacy,” the European Court of Justice mimicked the beginnings of a European supranational justice structure. Formally known as the “Court of Justice of the European Communities,” it is the only organ originally formed under the auspices of the Treaty of Rome that still exists today. “Widely accepted as an important intergovernmental instrument,” the Court’s seven judges serve six-year terms and are responsible for hearing disputes between members of the “European communities,” particularly those relating to treaties. The presence of such a supranational European justice system (or at least the official implementation thereof) once again alludes to the mode of standardized control a select number of West European nations instigated with the Treaty of Rome. An “even closer union among the European people” therefore became synonymous with the implementation of a legal framework in the form of a supranational court. A supranational justice system, however, mimics the structure of parameters which inspired its

formation in the first place. In other words, it is problematic to seek a new system of unity through old approaches and expect a different outcome.

We can distill from this discussion three major points. One, in 1945 after the Second World War, nation-states entered another period of geographic and ideological transformation related specifically to the drawing of borders and the determining of citizenship. Two, at the same time as a codification of national belonging was taking place, the 1957 Treaty of Rome translated the display of international unity. Following global conflicts, a set of institutions emerged in the form of supranational directives such as European Atomic Energy Commission (EURATOM), the European Economic Commission (EEC), the European Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. Three, by aiming to standardize unity by way of “European” decision-making in the economic, financial, and legal sectors, nation-states in Europe imposed their own normative structure (upon themselves). Consequently, this approach affected migration after the Second World War. The notion of both a unified and centralized Europe capable of regulating mass movement continued with three additional foundations, namely the European Association for Population Studies (EAPS), the Schengen Agreement, as well as the implementation of machine readable passports (MRPs).

In 1983, the European Association for Population Studies (EAPS) was formally established in The Hague as a “European demographics association” succeeding the European Centre for Population Studies (ECPS) that was set up in Paris in 1953. Those presiding over both entities included individuals from Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The EAPS describes itself as a “non-profit, scientific, professional organization that promotes research on population issues.” At the time of its inception, the idea was to establish an academic foundation

to the field of population studies, with a specific focus in refugees and international migration (Dirk van de Kaa, 2011 Memorandum). The main motivator was to have a new generation that would observe and record demographic developments in Europe, ultimately involving a new generation of population scientists in all European countries with a certain scholarly tradition in that field. As an international and interdisciplinary forum for population studies EAPS has a special focus on Europe. Currently it organizes the European Population Conference (EPC) which takes place every two years, as well as other activities. EAPS has initiated and granted its auspices to several collaborative initiatives such as Population Europe: European Population Partnership, the European Journal of Population, as well as the European Doctoral School of Demography (EDSD).

The Schengen Agreement was among the first provisions to focus legislatively on the issue of simultaneous, multi-national policing. Although it was outside of the framework of the European Economic Community, the treaty was the first visible manifestation of member states' concerns regarding the abolition of intra-member state border controls and the effects on policing (Guild and Geyer 6, 221, 267). The defining characteristic of the Schengen Agreement is that it permitted "free movement of people between the signatory countries, without border, customs or immigration controls." The original signatories at Schengen, Luxembourg in 1985 were Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Greece, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden subsequently joined. All except Norway and Iceland are members of the European Union but the Schengen agreement itself is not part of the EU structure (the UK is not a signatory as it chose to reserve the right to screen solely people entering the country).

Political scientist Robert Fischer suggests that the Schengen Accord was instituted for the purpose of both “migration control and combating crime” (Fischer 13). Fischer also attributes great complexity to the Schengen Accord by describing it as the catalyst for “one of the most dynamic EU law fields” (13). He continues: “the transformation from intergovernmental to transgovernmental, and...into supranational law led to a unique legal interaction between direct applicable EU regulations, bi-/ and unilateral intergovernmental conventions and Member States laws” (Fischer 13).

Fischer’s perspective on the Schengen Accord is notable on multiple levels. First, there is the primary assertion that officially implemented regulation is necessary not just for ensuring order in migration, but also to aid in reducing crime. This, in turn, suggests that some people who cross artificially established borders bring with them behavior that is damaging to the receiving country as a whole. Second, the association of human mobility with the concept of control suggests that official governing entities display both the confidence and need to regulate an essential aspect of human behavior. The contrast in the spontaneity of human mobility and the goal of standardizing such an all-encompassing element of daily existence immediately presents a pragmatic conflict. How does an official body, both on the regional and national levels, coordinate a network of regulation that must occur simultaneously as well as match other regional and national entities in a different area of the (in this case) European continent? Furthermore, why did the Schengen Accord mark the official start of such parameters? Fischer’s reference to the “dynamic law fields” of the European Union hints at two additional concerns. One, in addition to a standard and mutually agreed-upon chronological beginning of documented migration with the Schengen Acquis, the mention of the European Union now fulfills the geographical areas in question. However, the term “European” is misleading here, for it does not

include all of the nations that are understood to belong to the European continent. Two, Fischer's choice to describe the laws that are to theoretically implement and enforce "migration control" as "dynamic" supports the pragmatic difficulty of successfully instituting such regulation in the first place. The very need to magnify the legal framework of documented migration reveals that a standardized network that controls human mobility is improbable, or at the very least, exponentially difficult to execute.

"The paradigmatic scene, perhaps of the modern era . . . is that of the immigration officer examining a passport" (Hoffmann-Axthelm 196). A crucial step in the standardization of existence was the increasing acceptance of the relationship between knowledge and security that ultimately articulated a new type of passport and border control (Robertson 343). The official identity of a person crossing a nationally defined border is usually established through a visa, work permit, identity card, international student identification, and the passports, to name a few. The possession of any of these formally issued documents validates the physical presence of the person in the eyes of the issuing government. Although such written confirmation is only attributable to the individual listed in such a document, the document itself follows a standardized format established by a government entity. This was not always the case. While one of the earliest surviving references of a "safe conduct" (passport) document dates to the reign of Henry V in England in 1414, today's machine-readable passports (MRPs) have been in place only since 1981 (Abeyratne 192).

Until the late nineteenth century, establishing the official identity of a person largely depended on nothing other than the memory of specific individuals (Robertson 335). This is not to say that no written identification records existed, instead, there was no uniform or streamlined verification process across nation-states, and even oftentimes across regions in the same nation.

It was in the early twentieth century that passports as we may recognize them would emerge as a result of the Convention on International Civil Aviation in 1920. Following the conference, the first modern British passport, for example, was a single page, folded into eight and held together with a cardboard cover. It was valid for two years and, along with a photograph and signature, contained a hand-written personal description, including details such as "shape of face", "complexion" and "features" (Lloyd 24, 26-32). However, parallel to events such as the UN Conventions regarding refugees in 1951 and 1967 as well as the Euro-specific entities established by the Treaty of Rome, translating identity into a standard bureaucratic expression necessitated the introduction of a new format.

The "collection and classification of acceptable facts and evidence" (Robertson 336) used for identifying an individual culminated in the first MRP issued in the United States of America in 1981. The format and technical specifications were first published by the International Organization for Standardization (a non-governmental organization founded in 1947 in London, UK) in 1980. The MRP articulated a specific purpose, namely the delineation and enforcement of "a single identity through which an individual must conduct [her/his] affairs, and on which the state can rely for monitoring that conduct" (Sankar 4). The MRP is therefore a passport whose machine-readable zone contains descriptive details of the owner. Data such as the passport number, date of expiry of the passport, name of the issuing State, passport-owner's name, nationality, sex, date of birth, and in some cases, a national ID number are available for "simultaneous computer interrogation." The MRP "enables rapid machine clearance, quick verification and instantaneous recording of personal data" (Convention on International Civil Aviation Commentary 192).

The official international agreement (and therefore, conviction) that the personal information embedded in a passport is “in fact” someone’s identity is both a new way of classifying existence and circulating information through “new bureaucratic logics of [perceived] objectivity” (Robertson 329). From a commercial, legal, and political standpoint, personal identity and legal identity consequently collapsed into one in order to “provide a stable and reliable object for governing” (329-330). In 1992, alongside MRPs and the civil war in the Balkans, specifications relating to machine readable visas (Convention Commentary 193) were published to control the transmission of information in and out of a country at the time of its physical occurrence. In fact, the time when international political conflicts once again began to intensify in the final three decades of the twentieth century was exactly the period during which the process of regulating a migrant’s official identity gained momentum. Formal definition of the “illegal,” “refugee,” and “asylum seeker” were barely finalized before another wave of conflicts prompted rapid cross-border migration and imposed ideological parameters such as the Schengen Acquis and administrative oversight through the European Association for Population Studies. Documentation followed suit in the form of standardized, machine readable passports and visas which were to function in a streamlined manner across nationally defined borders. Ultimately these measures permanently altered the way a migrant’s existence was to be recorded, perceived, and validated.

We may draw from this discussion a major, overarching point for the development of statist normativity. Entities such as the European Association for Population Studies (EAPS), arrangements such as the Schengen Agreement, and an identification standard such as the machine-readable passport (MRP) further reinforce a display of supranational unity among European nation-states. This is especially noteworthy as EAPS is a research foundation devoted

to studying refugees and international migration. The Schengen Agreement aims to regulate migration through a standardized framework that transcends national borders. In turn, the MRP aims to ensure that communication between regional and state entities concerned with migration is streamlined and prompt. The governing of migration is thus a multi-tiered endeavor, involving the facilitation from the academic, legal, and commercial sectors.

In the section that follows, I will discuss certain sociopolitical aspects of Germany's history, including post-World War Two German refugees and labor treaties, asylum and citizenship parameters of Germany's Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), and the influx of more international refugees. I will engage with this selection of events to show Germany as a pivotal case study in both 20th century migration, and in particular of statist normativity.

1.2 THE RELATIVITY OF BELONGING ON THE EURASIAN PENINSULA: THE CASE OF GERMANY

In his 2006 work *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, Dirk Spilker argues that “geographically...Europe is nothing more than a peninsula of Eurasia” (Spilker 54), a collection of territories which “the greatest statesmen within Europe, [namely] Bismarck and Metternich” described as “not really a political reality” (55). While one may (and should) challenge Spilker's confident designation of “greatest statesmen” in modern European history, his description of Europe as nothing more than an element of another continent warrants closer consideration.

Following centuries of upheavals and redrawing of boundaries within empires and eventually those of nation-states in the nineteenth century, the political map of Europe

transformed once again. After the First World War, four empires, namely the Austrian, Ottoman, German, and Russian either entirely fell apart or became greatly reduced in size “while almost a dozen new or enlarged states in Central and Eastern Europe came into existence” (Spilker 49). The Ottoman Empire in particular experienced a lengthy five-year downfall, during which the dissolution involved “a larger portion of the globe than any of the other three former empires” (48-9). As Spilker goes on to emphasize, “most of the results of the grandiose redrawing of the Near East remain to this day” (49-50). Apart from the division of Czechoslovakia, the breakup of Yugoslavia, and the redrawing of the Middle East, officially implemented national borders for the most part steadied well into the twenty-first century. In one particular case, however, one country in what we perceive as Western Europe experienced a number of dynamic shifts in its own concept of community, belonging, and the nation-state.

In the late spring of 1944, following “precedents from earlier wars” (Spilker 68), the European Advisory Committee drew the main lines of occupation that would lead to four zones and eventually to two Germanys. Apart from the well-known sociopolitical mechanisms implemented in the occupation zones, a significant level of oversight regarding habitual life and daily routine was put into place. In his sourcebook, *Germany 1945-1949*, Manfred Malzahn discusses a number of locally implemented regulations for civilians, including the so-called “non-fraternization rules.” He outlines the language in an instructional pamphlet given to the French who were interacting with Germans: “...beware of the German smiling at you...they are preparing your downfall. The child, the woman, the old man who implore your pity are Nazi agents” (Malzahn 71). These kinds of assertions are a clear example of not just wholesale occupation – they also directly foster an “us versus them” mentality. Interactional guidelines such as these (as a condition of occupation) further alienated those civilians who may have been

looking to find ways to function in an otherwise disassembled state. Alongside this approach, Malzahn continues by illustrating Germany as a country “whose bureaucratic machinery had all but collapsed with the totalitarian regime it served” (129). The new administrations had limited powers and controlled communications, to the point where restrictions such as blackouts and curfews (including “no more than five people maximum gathering”) were implemented. Bicycles and private cars “were to be used with special permission” while “all cameras and binoculars [were to be] handed to military authorities” (148-9). No pigeons were to be used for communication and any documents sent through the mail could not contain “sheet music and/or chess problems” due to the possibility of containing code (150).

While it may seem almost nonsensical to mention parameters such as these, it is important not to lose sight that they were part of a two-fold control apparatus. First, these regulations were meant to subdue any remaining fascist thinking and/or behavior. Second, they were highly limiting in a civilian’s everyday routine. Parameters such as blackouts, curfews, and severely restricted use of cars and bicycles were part of a systematic approach meant to control both existence and movement. Such a methodology reflects certain scenarios an “illegal,” “refugee,” and/or “asylum seeker” may experience after escaping a hostile environment or when experiencing difficulties accessing permanent protection in the receiving country. While these are certainly not identical, the scenario in which an “illegal,” “refugee,” and/or “asylum seeker” encounters resistance when trying to build a routine in a new environment reflects the instance in which a civilian in Allied-occupied Germany must adapt to an absolute change in behavior and approach to daily life. Both individuals face the dismantling of a previous, known life in a distinctly short amount of time. Both individuals also must use exceptionally limiting circumstances in order to reach once again the quality of routine they once had. What we see

here is that persons inhabiting territory on either side of a border may experience a condition of refugee-dom as a result of state control.

As discussed earlier, the second half of the twentieth century saw an extremely high number of both German war refugees and German expellees. In her 1949 account *The problem of 12 million German refugees in today's Germany*, Betty Barton illustrates the complex narrative of “people of German descent” who lived outside of 1936 borders but who were “forced out of surrounding countries into a defeated Germany” once the country capitulated. These so-called *Auslandsdeutsche* refugees were German minority groups in countries outside of the 1936 borders to whom Hitler had offered German citizenship. These individuals also possessed citizenship in their country of residence, and, more notably, had enjoyed ties to “mainland” Germany and Austria apart from their ancestors. Once the Second World War was over, there were neither resources nor mechanisms in place to isolate “guilty individuals” among the *Auslandsdeutsche*. Instead, the re-established governments heeded popular demand and ordered the eviction of entire *Auslandsdeutsche* populations: “...some fled with what they could carry, others were loaded into cattle cars and railroaded across borders” (Barton 6-10). Approximately three million Sudetenland Germans were expelled from (then) Czechoslovakia, five hundred thousand Swabians of South German ancestry from Hungary, five million refugees from Poland proper, four hundred thousand from the former Yugoslavia, and two hundred thousand from Romania (to name a select few statistics). Roughly over one hundred thousand *Auslandsdeutsche* fled with retreating armies, fearing Russian and/or Yugoslav Partisan retribution, while another two hundred thousand fled across Italian and Austrian borders, “most having made their way *illegally* into Germany” (5, my emphasis). Allied authorities in Germany at the time refused admission of the Yugoslavian *Auslandsdeutsche* refugees due to “crowded living conditions and

food shortages” (11). Additionally, the previously discussed International Refugee Organization (IRO) that was in full operation was not able to offer help because its constitution specifically prohibited assisting “persons of German ethnic origin, whether German nationals or members of German minorities in other countries” (xxx).

To push further, let us consider Articles 116a and 16a of Germany’s Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*). From 1913 until 1999, Germany’s *jus sanguinis* citizenship law under Article 116a was based on blood lineage and familial descent. It states, among other things, that a “German...is a holder of German citizenship, or a refugee or exiled person of German ethnicity, or a spouse or descendant, who was admitted to the territory of the German Reich according to its borders of December 31, 1937” (xxx). Furthermore, Article 116a also makes it clear that “[f]ormer German citizens whose citizenship was withdrawn on political, racial, or religious grounds between January 30, 1933, and May 8, 1945, and their descendants, shall be *renaturalized* on application. They shall *not* be considered as expatriated” (xxx).

From 1949 until 1993, Article 16a of the German constitution – also known as the Right to Asylum – guaranteed *an absolute right* to asylum for anyone persecuted on political grounds (Basic Law 23, my emphasis). In December 1992, the German government amended Article 16a (Hailbronner 159-60) whereby the Constitution still maintained *the individual right* of asylum (160, my emphasis) with new stipulations. For example, the right to asylum may not be invoked by anyone from a “member state of the European Communities” or a country where “the application of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is assured” (160). Those coming from a country outside of the “European Communities” who are being persecuted politically “shall be specified by legislation requiring the consent of the Bundesrat.” Like the 1967 Convention

Relating to the Status of Refugees, paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 16a request that an incoming person “present facts supporting the supposition that...he or she is subject to political persecution.” The federal court of Germany reserves the right to investigate such “proof” at their own discretion.

Here we may observe that both Article 116a and 16a were a humane response to otherwise untenable conditions for German war expellees and refugees. With the IRO not stepping in to offer aid, both regulations protected the millions who were forced to leave countries such as former Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and former Yugoslavia. The question remains however: how many of the millions of *Auslandsdeutsche* who immigrated to Germany after the Second World War did so against their will? Did they want to exercise their “right” to German citizenship while being held in large temporary receiving camps (Barton 24) or did they consider any one of the “former” countries their (new) home? For example, while ethnic Germans, particularly those in the Banat region of present-day northern Serbia, retained strong ties with their ancestral “homeland,” it is extremely difficult to determine whether those who left the aforementioned countries for Germany also fall in the category of “refugees” or displaced German nationals, for example. The immediacy of the refugee experience treats refugees collectively, and not as individual migrants. Natural disasters, wars, mass deportations, and the like are extreme chronological circumstances. They leave very little, if any room for autonomous negotiation on the part of the refugee and for a systematic approach on the part of the sending and receiving governments in question.

After experiencing significant population movements into the country after the Second World War, the West German government stimulated further immigration well into the second half of the twentieth century. With a steadily booming economy and a major shortage of skilled

workers, beginning in 1955 West Germany signed labor treaties with countries such as Turkey, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia and the nation-states of the former Yugoslavia in hopes of receiving large groups of “Gastarbeiter” (guest workers) who would be hired to work in industrial sectors. Because the German government prepared only to temporarily house those who came to work, no thought was given to any type of social integration of Germany’s new immigrants simply because they were not supposed to remain long enough “to warrant it” (Adelson, Atlas of a Tropical Germany, Introduction xvii). Furthermore, the West German nation as a whole was surprised because it discovered that the individuals “who came as short-term konjunktur [boom, economic cycle] were increasingly remaining for the long-term” (Mandel 51). Mandel also appropriately recalls a statement in the short essay “Überfremdung” (“Over-Foreignization”) written by the Swiss author Max Frisch: “Man hat Arbeitskräfte gerufen, und es kommen Menschen” (“We called for labor, but people came instead.”) Approximately two decades later after a period of recession and massive unemployment, the German government put an official and rapid halt to active recruitment of foreign laborers in 1973, “offer[ing] financial rewards to those who would pack up and leave their German “host” country” (Adelson, Atlas xvii).

Guest workers did not fall under the protection of Article 116a (Right to Asylum) because they entered Germany on the basis of a work invitation. *Jus sanguinis* remained in effect until 1999 which meant that labor immigrants (and their resulting families) who came between 1955 and 1973 were ineligible for permanent residence in the form of citizenship for a minimum of two decades (depending on the year they entered Germany and on how long the naturalization process, if successful, lasted). A similar situation occurred in the final decade of the twentieth century with refugees from the former Yugoslavia, for example. Between 1991 and 1993, Article 16a/the Right to Asylum article guaranteed asylum to those actively escaping the civil war in the

Balkan region. In December 1992, at the height of the conflict, Article 16a was amended so that asylum was granted on the basis of “present[ing] facts supporting the supposition that [an individual] is subject to political persecution.” The federal court of Germany reserved and continues to reserve the right to investigate such “proof” at its own discretion. This change to Article 16a caused an immediate decrease of 44% in asylum applications and a 41% increase in applications deemed “manifestly unfounded” by the Federal Office for the Recognition of Refugees (Hailbronner 166). Those granted asylum were categorized according to a multi-tiered system, including *Duldung* (toleration), *Aufenthaltsberechtigung* (residence eligibility), and *Aufenthaltsbefugnis* (residence authorization).

Furthermore, “ethnic Germans” who claimed German ancestry in the 1990s were obligated to prove their German ancestry and demonstrate that they suffered as a direct result of their “Germanness” in the past (Mandel 211-12). “Ethnic Germans” from Eastern European countries such as Poland, Russia, and Romania who have lived outside the Federal Republic and who claimed German ancestry in the 1990s were required to prove this through a complex set of tests. “Even if they did not speak German and had never been to Germany” (Adelson, *Atlas* xvi), they were obliged to express that “which within them is German” (Mandel 211). Applicants for repatriation were quizzed, among other things, on their observance of holidays and their knowledge of Christmas and Easter songs and foods in order to demonstrate that they were ready for “full [German] cultural assimilation” and “repudiation of citizenship” (Adelson, *Atlas* xvi). Mandel underlines that “ethnic Germans had to have suffered as a direct result of their Germanness to qualify for repatriation” (212). This presupposes that it is the experience of having suffered “at the hands of the Soviets...[but] having tenaciously held onto Germanness

and not denying or relinquishing it in times of adversity” (212) that guaranteed one the title of “German.”

The social context in Germany at the time is equally complex. The Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the country officially pronounced itself as the Federal Republic of Germany in 1990. These early years of unification were marked by a sharp increase in physical assaults on those who were identified as “others.” Gays, lesbians, Turks, transvestites, Yugoslavs, transsexuals, Moroccans, leftists, Tunisians, punks, and individuals who were perceived as “foreigners” or “others” experienced a ten-fold escalation in violent attacks. This, in combination with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 culminated in examples of dangerously exclusive German citizenship politics and fundamental beliefs in the idea of a German nation. The latter was supported by the use of public allegories in the political and social spectrum. Björn Engholm, the prime minister of the state of Schleswig-Holstein from 1988 to 1993 and the leader of the Social Democratic Party between 1991 and 1993, declared that asylum seekers were a “threatening counter-race” whose existence posed danger to the “survival of Germany.” In 1988, the Bavarian head of state Edmund Stoiber claimed that Germans were slowly becoming “hybridized and racially infested.” A councilman from the town of Dormagen denounced immigration as “the adulteration and filthy mishmashing of blood” (Mandel 209). In November of 1992, open displays of physical violence against foreigners spread and reached their peak when one elderly Turkish woman and two Turkish children were killed in an arson attack on their home in the town of Mölln. These murders were followed by another lethal fire-bombing of a private residence in Solingen in May 1993 where five Turkish women and children lost their lives and nine other people were hurt (Adelson, Atlas xiv). Adelson points out that the names of these two West German towns “have ever since served as a kind of electrifying emblem for real

and potential ... political instabilities and social anxieties” (xiv). For one young woman interviewed in 1998, the deadly arson attack from 1992 literally signaled a turning point in the telling of time: “for we say here: the time before the fire and the time after it” (Spiegel 17—double-check).

We may draw from this history three major points. First, Germany faced a number of rapidly occurring political and geographic challenges immediately after the Second World War. The beginning of the country’s absolute economic, political, and social capitulation paralleled the influx of twelve million German war refugees and expellees. Second, legal parameters as part of Germany’s Basic Law directly reacted to waves of immigration. Articles 116a and 16a of the *Grundgesetz* protected incoming German refugees as the International Refugee Organization did not do so at the time. The *jus sanguinis* and the “absolute right to asylum” clauses (as part of the two Articles) provided the only diplomatic solution to German refugees – that is, both guaranteed at least a long-term stay as part of an official administrative process. The two Articles, however, presented a significant obstacle for a large number of immigrants who entered Germany for the remainder of the twentieth century. The wording of Article 116a (German citizenship clause) remained the same until the year 2000, the year the German government officially adopted the naturalization process for citizenship. The language in Article 16a (Right to Asylum) changed so that the previous “absolute” right to asylum reflected a new conditional process beginning in 1993. This was done to reduce the number of incoming refugees, primarily from the Balkan region. At the same time, “ethnic Germans” who claimed German ancestry in the 1990s were obligated to prove their German ancestry and demonstrate that they suffered as a direct result of being German in the past. Lastly, the right to asylum and citizenship regulations in Germany contributed to the political and social backlash against “refugees” and “asylum

seekers.” The policies closely reflected the structure and therefore the inefficacy of the international 1951/1967 Conventions (Regarding the Status of Refugees). This, in combination with anti-“foreigner” rhetoric caused the beginning of a wave of discord between “Germans” and “non-Germans,” ultimately prompting a re-evaluation of what it means to belong to a territory in the new millennium.

1.3 CONCLUSION: WHO GETS TO BELONG?

Migratory flows are an essential aspect of human evolution just like international migration is a central dynamic within globalization. However common, the act of crossing a border attains new meaning throughout history. For example, the fall of the Austrian, Ottoman, German, and Russian empires in the late nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries brought a foundational change in the status of the border. The perception of movement shifted from crossing regional lines within an empire to crossing borders that belong to different nation-states. Consequently, asserting and thus strengthening new national borders in the early twentieth century gave way to fixed notions of self-governance. An element of this self-governance on part of newly formed nation-states included intensive bilateral, regional, and international treaties seeking to regulate immigration. Controlling what now became movement across an official national border included a reevaluation of already available symbolic elements and the implementation of new regulations. While nation-states absorbed already available attributes such as “migrant” and “refugee,” both terms took on different valences with the official addition of “asylum seeker” and “illegal” in modern discursive construction.

Physical mobility following the Second World War notably symptomized a specific and complex arrangement of historical and sociopolitical circumstances. While global migration rates “remained relatively stable..., the political salience of migration...strongly increased” (Castles, de Haas, and Miller 1, 15, and 216). The act of migration attained a greater presence in national and international debates because governance of physical mobility relied on a multilayered documented approach in the form of machine-readable passports (MRPs), standardized visa types, and asylum grants, for example. These new attempts to administrate, and thus philosophically and tangibly contain a comprehensive mode of human behavior produced a fixed hierarchy of belonging.

Such a vested preoccupation with documenting migrants resulted in a complex interaction. On the one hand, the second half of the twentieth century paved the way for standardized parameters and regulated migration. On the other, a system meant to provide multiple levels of identification for individuals who crossed an officially established border resulted in the spontaneous exclusion of those who were not able to fit into a politically established parameter of belonging. Consequently, an inverse relationship formed between an existence that resists official regulation on part of the migrant and the increasing preoccupation with either changing or identifying such reality on part of official government entities. This divergence supports the split between those who are “documented,” i.e. those who “belong,” and those who are “undocumented,” that is, those who do not. Furthermore, migrants who are perceived to be “undocumented,” “illegal,” or “irregular” are associated with a damaging stigma that has in turn permeated social and political sectors of society, and, in some cases, the academic communities. Ultimately, these classified divisions of “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “illegal” became not only the leading, but the only designations in political and cultural debates

that engage with migration. An increase in international policies, border controls, and the act of regulating migration on the basis of standardized parameters consequently ushered in a new era of statist normativity.

The construction of statist normativity is visible in a number of bilateral agreements. For example, decrees such as the 1938 Convention Regarding Status of Refugees Coming from Germany, the establishment of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in 1947, and the 1951/1967 Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees display two key characteristics that aid in establishing statist normativity. One, agreements such as the 1951/1967 Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees are reactive. The official implementation of parameters in regard to refugees in the twentieth century occurred after a group of people escaped their country of origin. As the regulations consequently refer back to a particular refugee crisis, they reduce preemptive thinking for future emergencies. Two, both the agreements as well as the definitions of the “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and “illegal” are one-sided. The language detailing the parameters of how one defines and treats each individual bearing one of the three designations accommodates the ruling administration in the receiving country. The resulting documents recognize the presence of the “refugee,” the “asylum seeker,” and the “illegal.” However, in the case of the “refugee” and the “asylum seeker,” a government’s official acknowledgement and, in certain cases, resulting support for these migrants is conditional.

We may also observe statist normativity through geographically binding contracts such as the 1985 Schengen Agreement. The treaty was among the first to focus on simultaneous, multi-national policing. It also reflected member states’ interest in replacing intra-member state border controls with a comprehensive policing system. An example of supranational jurisdiction such as the Schengen further reinforced the dividing line between “us,” vs. “them,” between those

belonging to a member state and those who cross its borders seeking refuge. Furthermore, the association of human mobility with the concept of control suggests both the need and confidence to regulate a comprehensive aspect of human behavior. This in turn, presents philosophical as well as tangible difficulties, for how are we to regulate an aspect of life that continuously evolves?

Finally, if we turn to the political and economic history of Germany, we see some of the most significant developments, interactions, and complexities for examining both migration and statist normativity. Germany not only experienced its own process of unification – it also held the unique position of being part of the Eastern border of the European Union in the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, Germany played a historical role in both unleashing and experiencing waves of population movement. Following the Second World War, over ten million *Auslandsdeutsche* escaped their primary resident country and crossed the border into Germany. Between 1955 and 1973 the West German government encouraged the immigration of Gastarbeiter in order to assist in the rebuilding of the economic workforce and infrastructure. As we entered the final two decades of the twentieth century, however, attitudes towards immigration shifted. Helmut Kohl's 1983 utterance „Deutschland ist kein Einwanderungsland“ [“Germany is not an immigration country“] signaled a break with previous dispositions and regulations. While Articles 116a and 16a cleared the way for German war expellees and refugees to cross the national border, Article 116a and the 1993 amendment to Article 16a severely moderated the number of refugees allowed to enter. The 1951/1967 Conventions Regarding the Status of Refugees held strong decades later. Proving a well-founded fear of persecution was once again a subjective act forced to function in an ideally objective, legal manner while anti-refugee and anti-“foreigner” sentiment grew in Germany both socially and politically. Germany

experienced both division and divisiveness among its own people due to World War Two consequences and the difficulties of uniting two Germany-s after 1989. Nevertheless, in the 1990s the government amended its Basic Law to decrease the number of incoming refugees and the number of refugees ultimately allowed to remain for the long term.

The language meant to protect refugees and asylum seekers contains a great degree of hesitancy. Those who cross a border under great duress are viewed as often bringing social disruption, political instability, and threats to unity. Individuals become politicized bodies under statist normativity. Politicized bodies must present one definitive reference point at a time. A body's loss of a fixed reference point calls for an immediate, standardized re-identification: a refugee must have a birth certificate from the sending country, a visa in the receiving country, or at the very least, a permit to cross the national border. As we see in the history of Germany after the Second World War, one has to demonstrate a loss of belonging to have the chance to claim citizenship anew. A time of national change in particular motivates the exclusion of anyone who may not fit a historically predetermined identity. The paradox here is that change within a country views the change or differences it may see in a "refugee," in an "asylum seeker," or in an "illegal" as a threat. As the receiving country's government fixes these parameters, the characterizations of a "refugee," an "asylum seeker," or an "illegal" are therefore normative, for they solely operate on a standard of a one-sided, predetermined reference point of identity.

Finally, I would like to return to the semantic and discursive definitions of "migrant," "refugee," "asylum seeker," and "illegal." While "migrant" is semantically the most comprehensive out of the four terms as it represents one moving from one place to another, discursively it has adopted the modern phrasing of moving across national borders. The "refugee" is tied inextricably to a rapid and an involuntary displacement from her/his homeland

while the “asylum seeker” is an individual who was most likely first a refugee, but has already begun the official process of petitioning the receiving government for a residence permit. Finally, “illegal” is a highly uncertain term as it describes an individual who does not have official permission to remain in the country of arrival. While the “illegal’s” body is present, s/he has no official identity. However, we may argue that a “refugee” is also “illegal” initially if s/he did not have the opportunity to apply for certain paperwork. This is especially possible if we think of threatening occurrences such as natural disasters or wars – circumstances that do not allow for due process. What we see from these definitions is that cross-border movement resists a fixed definition. Statist normativity as constructed in the commercial, legal, and political sectors has to adopt movement as a process, not as a set of fixed, graspable moments. As normativity has become as integral of a part of society as migration has, it is necessary to recognize the intricate network of exchanges between individual adaptability and national authority, between the effects of federally issued documents and the manner in which human agency transforms their parameters in real time. The following chapters engage with specific examples in cultural production that give us further insight into how to integrate the element of process into statist normativity.

**2.0 “WIDERSTAND IST VORBEI, SIE MÜSSEN WIDERSPRÜCHLICHKEIT
ERZEUGEN.” [“RESISTANCE IS OVER, YOU MUST PRODUCE CONTRARINESS.”]**

–EXPOSURE OF STATIST NORMALIVITY IN *AUSLÄNDER RAUS!*

SCHLINGENSIEFS CONTAINER

“Achtung! Achtung! Hier spricht der Lautsprecherwagen! Wien entflammen! Schlingensiefs Container ist wieder da! Achtung! Achtung! Ab 13.6 im Filmcasino! Kommen Sie! Staunen Sie! Lernen Sie! Der Container ist wieder da! Und geht nie wieder weg! Die ganze Wahrheit über Österreichs Faschisten!” [Attention! Attention! The loudspeaker-car is speaking! Inflammate Vienna! Schlingensief’s container is here again! Attention! Attention! Starting on June 13th in the Filmcasino movie theater! Come! Be amazed! Learn! The container is here again! And will never go away! The entire truth about Austria’s fascists!] (*Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*).

Uttered in a guttural, mocking tone by Christoph Schlingensief, the phrases echo across Vienna on a warm spring day in 2001 as a couple of mini three-wheel trucks drive through the city’s downtown streets, complete with matching loudspeakers fixed on top of each cab. A rotating billboard mounted on the back of each vehicle displays still frames from the documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*, a film by Paul Poet that chronicles a six-day-long art happening organized by Christoph Schlingensief in the summer of 2000. The speeding mini-trucks startle pedestrians, cause policemen to shake their heads, and prompt a

carriage driver to momentarily stop his horse and buggy, ultimately confusing its tourist passengers.

The documentary *Ausländer Raus!* screened for the first time at the independent movie theater Filmcasino in Vienna, Austria on June 13, 2001. Film director Paul Poet attended while Christoph Schlingensiefel was completing *Freakstars 3000*, an “American Idol” / “The X Factor” – inspired television project that features a group of physically and mentally disabled individuals and their experiences as they go through a casting process. For the premiere of *Ausländer Raus!* a very excited and grateful Schlingensiefel recorded “a greeting message” for the audience at the Filmcasino movie theater: “Dass der Film jetzt endlich in Wien läuft, dass der Film endlich existiert, das war sehr schwierig...” [“The fact that the film is finally being shown in Vienna, the fact that it finally exists, all of that was very difficult...”]. Before and after crediting Paul Poet for his tireless commitment to the project, Schlingensiefel asks part of the cast of *Freakstars 3000* to say hello to everyone in Vienna. They yell “Grüss Gott!” four times and Schlingensiefel joins in during the last two utterances. Then he asks each cast member present whether they have something to say to the audience in Austria. One of them slowly begins to sing “Die Sonne scheint für alle gleich...” [“The sun shines for all just the same...”] while three others, including Schlingensiefel join in: “...warum nicht auch für Österreich...” [...why not also for Austria...]. Schlingensiefel then screams “Kämpft für eure Freiheit! Wir kommen wieder! Wir kommen wieder!” [Fight for your freedom! We’ll return again! We’ll return again!]. Everyone jumps out of their chairs and repeatedly stomps their feet to the ground while rhythmically chanting the final statement four additional times in unison.

The premiere of the documentary *Ausländer Raus!* is telling on multiple levels. Christoph Schlingensiefel, the artist responsible for creating the happening featured in the

documentary, openly asserts on camera that the very existence of the film is almost unbelievable. He claims that showing the film specifically in Vienna was also difficult to realize. While we may speculate that the making of the documentary was a complex process, this does not explain why Schlingensiefel considers its screening in Vienna an achievement. Schlingensiefel also involves members of another cast to help him drive the “greeting message” home. This “greeting message” is not just any. It employs lyrical excerpts from the 1952 political satire film *1. April 2000*, made in Austria during the Allied occupation of the country. The film portrays a victimized future Austria that is still subject to the unnecessary control by the four Allied powers. To assert its independence, the film shows a composer writing a new national anthem whose words Schlingensiefel appropriates with the cast of *Freakstars 3000* at the 2001 premiere of Paul Poet’s documentary. The individuals involved in *Freakstars 3000* (per Schlingensiefel’s guidance, but nevertheless) chant in unison, reference a fight for freedom, mention a symbol of equality in the form of the sun shining for all, and exclaim hope that the same sun may also shine on Austria.

What is it about the happening in the summer of 2000 that was so controversial? Why was the making of its documentary such a challenge and why was the premiere in Vienna such an accomplishment? Who is Christoph Schlingensiefel and why does he involve members of another ongoing project, namely a group of physically and mentally disabled individuals, to help commemorate the premiere for a film whose title suggests kicking out foreigners? And, coincidentally, how does a mid-twentieth century political satire that paints an independent and progressive future in Austria help premiere the 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus!* ? The 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* and the resulting 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefels Container* expose statist normativity. To illustrate

this, the chapter first synthesizes available scholarship on Schlingensief's projects in a new manner. Because Schlingensief employed various stylistic approaches at once to comment upon highly controversial sociopolitical issues, his works are multifaceted and complex. Consequently, both popular and scholarly opinions of Schlingensief's projects are often polarizing and reductive, which ultimately results in a collective misunderstanding of the work and the loss of critical discourse. After contextualizing Schlingensief alongside a selection of his early works in film and theater, the discussion then moves to outline several key scenes in the happening *Bitte liebt Österreich* by way of the documentary *Ausländer Raus!* The scene analysis reveals that both the happening and the documentary aurally, spatially, and visually demonstrate the discrepancies between the needs of those labeled as "asylum seekers," "illegals," and/or "refugees" and the controls of the country (in this case, Austria) in which these individuals temporarily live. The event and its documentary neither solve nor offer an alternative approach to the perception and treatment of those labeled as "asylum seekers," "illegals," and/or "refugees." However, the examination ultimately reveals that a solution was not Schlingensief's goal, as the happening was meant to draw attention to the ongoing and destructive treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in Austria at the turn of the millennium. What we see in *Bitte liebt Österreich* and in *Ausländer Raus!* is Schlingensief's deliberate overidentification with the power discourse, which the artist terms as "Widersprüchlichkeit" [contrariness]. By allowing the overidentification to play out without any type of protocol among the public, Schlingensief confirmed the asylum seeker's state-codified reality – statist normativity – at the turn of the new millennium.

2.1 RECOGNITIONS ALL AROUND

2.1.1 Recognizing media contexts

The 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* is also known as *Ausländer Raus!* (the phrase “Ausländer Raus!” was inscribed on a sign and perched on top of the container, ultimately becoming one of the visual focal points of the happening). The performance piece took place between June 11 and June 17, 2000. It was part of the “Wiener Festwochen,” an annual cultural festival in Vienna that presents works in music theatre, fine arts, performance, dance, music, installations, discourse, workshops and “new art forms that cannot yet be categorized.” The festival prides itself on featuring controversial and non-conformist projects, not “paus[ing] at genre boundaries” (Wiener Festwochen official website).

The internet TV pioneer webfreetv.com filmed Schlingensief’s 7-day-long event around the clock which resulted in over 100 hours of footage. At the end of October 2000, Suhrkamp Verlag published *Schlingensiefs Ausländer raus: Bitte liebt Österreich – Dokumentation* which included a full script, still frames from the event as well as a CD-ROM. As director Paul Poet points out, however, “das Geschehen aber [lebte] vor allem von den Bildern, [und so] musste eine Dokumentation her, um die Aktion nachvollziehbar zu machen” [“the happening lived first and foremost in the images, and so there had to be a documentary in order to make the action comprehensible”] (RealFictionFilme).

The footage was inaccessible, however, as a number of webfreetv’s shareholders who supported Jörg Haider’s conservative party turned webfreetv into an incorporated entity after the happening ended. The film production company Bonusfilm GmbH bought the material and after nine months of viewing, sorting through, and in some cases obtaining numerous permissions for

reconstructing the material (specifically for interviews with philosophers and public figures who appear in the film), the documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container* finally saw the light of day. The documentary premiered in 2001 and was ultimately distributed as a DVD in 2002. Paul Poet's documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container* is the only documentary that chronicled the event.

Christoph Schlingensief's live happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche/ Ausländer Raus!* embraced its own creative space, both physically and temporally. At the same time, a perspective of the happening is available for repeated viewing in the form of Paul Poet's documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*. The 90-minute record of the event represents both a small fraction of the originally available 100+ hours of footage and, as noted earlier, a specific perspective as a result of the extensive editing. However, there are three elements to consider. One, the happening would not benefit from an extended lifecycle and various theoretical engagements in art history, theatre, and film discourses if Schlingensief and Poet had not recorded and ultimately fought for the distribution of the work in both print and film format. We may view the happening past the days during which it occurred, something not usually afforded to theater/theater-like productions, at least in an official sense.

Two, the fact that statist normativity is present even with Poet and Schlingensief's perspective, editing, and a fraction of the 100+ hours footage demonstrates the direction of the piece (and the fact that statist normativity is inescapable). Three, the fact that the documentary encountered political resistance speaks to both its effect and importance. An actual political party became directly involved in stopping a repeat "viewing" of the event that occurred in June 2000. For all the mocking and dismissal of both Schlingensief and the performance piece, Jörg Haider's party still perceived a threat in what the documentary captured.

2.1.2 Recognizing the artist

Popular and scholarly opinions of Christoph Schlingensiefel are quite insistent. He was the “enfant terrible of contemporary political art” (Schmidt 27), a “splinter lodged under the skin” that was “irritatingly present: not painful but a constant reminder of something you would rather forget” (Hughes 318). Schlingensiefel’s films, television projects, and art happenings are “tedious to experience” as they are “filled with deliberate amateurism and discontinuity, unplanned and open-ended” so that they prove to be “torture even for those sympathetic to Schlingensiefel’s causes” (Young 79). Not only that, as a “spotlight-hogging ham” but still “an endearingly humble personage” (Young 75), Schlingensiefel also enjoyed being the “master of ceremonies” in his projects. As the actor, cameraman, editor, and in later cases, the set designer and builder (all under different pseudonyms), Schlingensiefel employed methods that were “often crude and messy,” his messages “simple and blunt” (78). His work is “always in some way over-the-top” or “farcically exaggerated” (Hughes 320), a “postmodern satire” that “takes aim at both individual characters’ folly and vice” and at “entire cultural traditions” (320-2). One critic describes Schlingensiefel’s complete oeuvre as based on “blunt, campy tastelessness that is directed towards social good through provocation” (Young 73).

From the summary above we may note how Christoph Schlingensiefel’s work evokes strong critiques. His projects are challenging to perceive and to absorb. Their perceived lack of continuity, blatant disparagement of cultural norms, and over-the-top execution leave little room for a clear understanding of the works’ ultimate intent and purpose. It is important to note, however, that qualifications such as “blunt,” “campy,” “crude,” “provocative,” and “tedious,” for example, are the kind of statements certain forms of art movements have evoked throughout history. The Dada movement following the First World War, 1960s Fluxus and the beginnings

of experimental performance, early 1970s Sots Art and Superfiction of the 1990s, to name just a few, all prompted a backlash in the name of what was understood to be “real art.” While discourses on art genres and their respective significance deserve separate consideration, in regard to Schlingensief we may consider the “blunt, campy tastelessness” a reaction to the form of art he practiced and helped develop. As popular, scholarly, and social understanding of what are thought to be controversial and provocative artworks evolves over time, the perception of such works changes as well and attains new significance.

Schlingensief clearly struck a nerve in the artistic and scholarly communities, nevertheless. He presented works at major public art and theatre institutions and festivals, including documenta, Wiener Festwochen, the Venice Biennale, and Kunstwerke as well as the Volksbühne in Berlin. Schlingensief directed Wagner at Bayreuth Festspielhaus [Bayreuth Festival Theatre], dedicated solely to the performance of operas by the 19th century German composer. One of Schlingensief’s most notable contributions occurred posthumously when he represented Germany at the 2011 Venice Biennale with his exhibition, ultimately winning the Golden Lion for Best National Participation (Young 73).

Schlingensief also had a long-standing relationship with MoMA PS1, one of the oldest and largest nonprofit contemporary art institutions in the United States. MoMA PS1 displays work with the goal to support new ideas, trends, and discourses in contemporary art. Schlingensief exhibited in this space intermittently since 1995 before MoMA PS1 hosted the solo exhibition Christoph Schlingensief from March 9 until August 31, 2014. It was a well-composed survey of his work in the different fields in which he operated, including film, theatre, television, opera, and visual art. In the catalogue accompanying Christoph Schlingensief, MoMA PS1 director Klaus Biesenbach situates Schlingensief in the context of his time and of

those artists who influenced him, including Joseph Beuys, Robert Smithson, Allan Kaprow, Paul Thek, and Dieter Roth. Although Schlingensiefel was too young for the generation of '68, Biesenbach defends that “the revolutionary 1960s and '70s, with their social upheavals and their art” impressed Schlingensiefel “in the tedium of Helmut Kohl’s reunited Germany of the ‘90s” (Biesenbach 111). Schlingensiefel grew up in West Germany in the 1960s and '70s, “where civil disobedience was the supreme civic duty,” and where “every action and even non-action” was viewed as “being political.” Biesenbach defends that Schlingensiefel made politics, history, private life, and art depend necessarily on one another (Young 75-6, Biesenbach 112).

When Schlingensiefel was diagnosed with lung cancer (he was a non-smoker) in early 2008, he took his suffering public, documenting his experiences with the illness in a 2009 book called *So schön wie hier kanns im Himmel gar nicht sein! [It Cannot Be as Beautiful in Heaven as It Is Here!]*. The 2008 work *Eine Kirche der Angst vor dem Fremden in mir [A Church of Fear of the Foreign within Me]* was a “fluxus anti-funeral that [Schlingensiefel] presided over, distributing wafers and wine” (Cornish 3). Schlingensiefel performed for the last time at the Bayerische Staatsoper München [Bavarian State Opera in Munich] in 2010 in a piece called *Via Intolleranza II*. It was a culmination of the project he undertook the previous year during which he traveled to Burkina Faso to build an “Opera Village.” At the end of *Via Intolleranza II* Schlingensiefel performed a short monologue on stage in which he “meticulously clarified why all charity in Africa is futile and false, including his own.” “Exactly because of it” he then asked for donations to his Opera Village in Burkina Faso (Cornish 4).

There are several interwoven complexities here. Christoph Schlingensiefel took his art very personally. As someone who “could not get along with lies” (Biesenbach 110), he also sought to expose certain injustices and idiosyncrasies in social and political trends. To showcase what he

deemed as the oppressive bias in his time, he sought out different media. Even then, Schlingensief reached across what he perceived as limitations of both film and theater. He constantly negated the “stability induced by the architecture and decorum of traditional theater,” for example (Young 76). At the 1997 performance at Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, Schlingensief advocated for the destruction of the theatre building so that the patrons would be instead forced to watch the “street theatre of prostitutes, drug addicts, and homeless people who populated the surrounding area” (Young 78).

Schlingensief clearly summarized his disdain for boundaries in his own words: "Ich hasse Theater, das Begrenzungen vorgibt, feste Anfangs- und Endzeiten oder einen Raum, in dem man sich nicht bewegen darf. Ich möchte mich gleitend bewegen" ["I hate theater, that forces boundaries, [as well as] firm beginning- and end-times or even a space, in which one cannot move. I would like to move glidingly"] (Sch. website). Schlingensief's reach across established borders became the hallmark of his work, either in his use of multiple media at once, or in the very fact that he exhibited internationally. At the same time, however, Schlingensief was “an extremely German artist and he always dealt very consciously with his history” (Young 76). With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Iron Curtain in 1989, “Schlingensief's disrespect for borders placed him in a far better position than many of his left-wing compatriots to negotiate a filmic self-understanding after German unification” (Hughes 327). Even early on with films Schlingensief made “Germany his primary concern” (331), focusing on “those on the margins of society, such as the disabled, the homeless, asylum seekers, and the unemployed.” In other words, the “outsider” figures who were most vulnerable to escalating violence in society became at least one of the foci in Schlingensief's films.

Christoph Schlingensiefel's disdain for boundaries in aesthetic expression and his acute awareness of political history, social norms, and societal expectations made for an unpredictable, yet dynamic combination. The fact that he continuously contradicted either a personal belief, when he told the audience during *Via Intolleranza II* that all charity in Africa is futile, for example, or that he immediately contradicted his own statement describing the personal belief when he then immediately asked for donations, is a strategy. It is an approach that forces the audience and/or the participants to stop momentarily in confusion (if they happen to realize the ongoing contradictions) and to inherently focus on what it is that they are actually doing. In other words, this approach of contrariness emphasizes the process, the *how* construction of socially imbedded responses and programmed beliefs. It seeks to interrupt a flow of routine behavior that may have lost social and/or even political meaning, but that continues to be implemented in everyday life.

2.1.3 Recognizing the beginnings

Christoph Schlingensiefel's work may be grouped into three phases: early work for film and television in the 1980s and 1990s, public actions and interventions in the 1990s and 2000s, and finally pieces that engage with more traditional theatrical and operatic forms, such as his productions of *Hamlet* in 2001 and *Parsifal* from 2004 until 2007. His final opera *Metanoia* premiered posthumously in October 2010.

Film was central to Schlingensiefel's early phase as an artist. Schlingensiefel worked for and alongside the German filmmaker Werner Nekes and collaborated with Alexander Kluge, which ultimately gained him recognition as a filmmaker. Schlingensiefel's films, including *Tunguska – Die Kisten sind da!* [*Tunguska – The Crates are Delivered!*] (1984), *Menu Total* (1985), and the

“Deutschlandtrilogie” which includes three feature films: *100 Jahre Adolf Hitler – Die letzte Stunde im Führerbunker* (1989) [*100 years of Adolf Hitler – the Last Hour in the Führer Bunker*], *Das deutsche Kettensägenmassaker* (1990) [*The German Chainsaw Massacre*], and *Terror 2000 – Intensivstation Deutschland/Deutschland außer Kontrolle* (1992) [*Terror 2000 – Intensive Care Unit Germany/Germany out of Control*], are a symbolic commentary on Germany’s political history and social responsibility in the twentieth century.

Tunguska – Die Kisten sind da! (1984) draws on a historical event, namely an explosion in Siberia in 1908 whose causes have been repeatedly theorized but never fully explained” (Hughes 333). In *Tunguska* two individuals fall into a dark underground quarry in a forest and are immediately snatched up by three avant-garde researchers and brought back to a castle. One of them, Mr. Norbert, lives with a wall unit from the 1960s and understands the language of mushrooms and owls while major Pater Hilf likes to set fires “for the future.” In one of the deciding scenes a heavy celluloid roll burns while the film it shows keeps running.

The explosion in Siberia remains an unexplained event to this day. While there are several far-fetched conspiracy theories, what may be ascertained is that on the morning of June 30, 1908, a massive explosion (believed to have originated in the sky) flattened approximately 80 million trees on 2,000 sq km of the taiga forest near the Podkamennaya Tunguska river in central Siberia. Any livestock and wild deer were incinerated, seismic rumbles were observed as far away as the United Kingdom, and a hundred years later the trees still grow at an askew angle (Geo book, 2014, BBC report). In the film *Tunguska*, Schlingensief channels both the scale of destruction and the unidentified causes of the actual event in 1908 to comment on Germany’s involvement in the Second World War. A word play such as the name “Pater Hilf,” for example, is not coincidental. This name translates as “Father Help” but it includes the imperative form of

the German verb “helfen” [help] in the second word, which complicates the function of the character in the film. On the one hand, one may initially interpret Father Help as either a religious or a secular military character (he does carry the title “major” in the film, although it is not consistently mentioned). However, the imperative element of “Hilf” [“Help(!)”) suggests that this “leader” intrinsically needs help from the outside. Furthermore, throughout *Tunguska* Father Help consistently sets fires “for the future,” a decision and/or personality trait that may reference the more tangible and horrific devastation in World War Two battle fields and concentration camps as well as the symbolic destruction of cultural heritage by the National Socialist regime. Schlingensiefel carries this through as Pater Hilf also sets fire to a heavy celluloid roll whose “real-time” on-screen destruction (as the viewer of the film *Tunguska* witnesses it) does not prevent the showing of the film. The development of the story, or of history rather, remains unaffected.

Although the storyline in *Tunguska – Die Kisten sind da!* is nonlinear and it includes quick, overlapping symbolic references, throughout the entire film Schlingensiefel grapples with the political elements and aftermath of Germany’s involvement in the Second World War. His desire to incorporate imagery from violent political histories to comment upon the incredible devastation and absurdity of such conflicts continues in the 1985 film *Menu Total*. The majority of *Menu Total* is set in an underground maze reminiscent of a bunker. Joe, the main protagonist, is forcibly turned over into what appears to be a type of psychiatric institution in that very same underground space. The only doctor in the institution wears a Nazi uniform and repeatedly throws up while a number of zombies occasionally dress Joe up as Hitler. As Joe unwillingly dons a Nazi uniform, the viewer hears a constant repertoire of war sounds (such as shooting and screaming) only to finally have it end with a bit of jazz that Joe himself performs.

Christoph Schlingensief's *Menu Total* focuses on physical and psychological imprisonment. The dark underground setting combined with involuntary detention at a psychiatric facility reflects the controlling and at times immobilizing effects of a dictatorship. Schlingensief blurs the lines when it comes to the characters, however. The sole doctor in the institution voluntarily wears a Nazi uniform, but he throws up at the sight of the American "Joe" being forced into one - even though he, the doctor, is keeping him "in treatment" against his will. While Schlingensief holds the National Socialist regime responsible, he does not clearly hold the individual accountable in *Menu Total*. Joe playing soothing jazz after all of the sounds of destruction subside reverts back to both the historical success on part of the Allies and, more noteworthy, it reminds the viewers which world power got to have the last, or rather, lasting word in this conflict.

In the five years from *Tunguska* in 1984 to the German Trilogy that began in 1989, Schlingensief further focused his work. He became increasingly more interested in contemporary economic and sociopolitical issues in a Germany that was struggling to unify its own people both theoretically and practically. Some argue that Schlingensief's work in the late 1980s sought to advance a "left-wing aesthetic in the postsocialist era" (Hughes 318-19), defined "as much by the fall of the Berlin Wall" and "the implosion of the German Democratic Republic" as it was by "Stammheim, the West German prison where leading members of the of the Baader-Meinhof group took their own lives in October 1977" (Hughes 318, Schmidt 30-32).

While it is true that radical left movements were diminishing and that the Berlin Wall fell, there are a number of other elements to consider. In 1982, West Germany elected a Christian Democratic government under the leadership of Helmut Kohl which would ultimately preside over a united Germany in 1989/1990. If we think back to the discussion in chapter 1, we

may recall that between 1955 and 1973, West Germany had already received large groups of guest workers, many of whom remained before and after unification. The signing of the Schengen Agreement occurred in 1985 while Articles 116a and 16a of Germany's "Grundgesetz" provided a solution for *Volksdeutsche* but further complicated an officially documented existence for asylum seekers and guest workers alike. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, open displays of violence against those viewed as "foreigners" spread, which included defining asylum seekers as a "threatening counter-race" and the deadly arson attack in the town of Mölln in November 1992. Between 1986 and 1989 the infamous *Historikerstreit* [*Historians' Dispute*] became the "most public and politically divisive of historians' debates in postwar Germany" (Caplan 587-8), notably represented by Ernst Nolte for the right-wing and by Jürgen Habermas for the left-wing intellectuals. Nolte spoke of the "Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will" ["the past that will not pass/decay"] and offered an alternative notion of Nazism as part of a prolonged European civil war between "Asiatic" Bolshevism and western civilization. Nolte insisted that the "genocidal origin sin" belonged to the Soviets while Nazism was a "fear-borne reaction to the acts of annihilation that took place during the Russian revolution" (Fitzpatrick 482). Habermas, on the other hand, argued Nolte's approach as an attempt to rehabilitate and even legitimize Nazism, which would ultimately normalize and historicize the Nazi past.

It is during this time of great political and sociocultural changes, increase in international conflicts, intellectual crises in dealing with the past, and complex parameters in cross-border movements that Schlingensiefel produced his first major film trilogy between 1989 and 1992. The German Trilogy engages with three different turning points in 20th century German history. While the 1989 film *Adolf Hitler – the Last Hour in the Führer Bunker* (shot in a disused World War II bunker) covers the dictator's final moments, *The German Chainsaw Massacre* (1990)

presents the German unification in 1990. The film shows a group of “Ossis” [nickname for citizens of the former German Democratic Republic] who cross the border into West Germany and soon thereafter are murdered by a psychopathic “Wessi” family with chainsaws. The final part in the trilogy, *Terror 2000* (1992) depicts two gangsters on the run who repeatedly torture asylum seekers in a small town in eastern Germany. They are constantly followed by desperate journalists as well as two ineffective detectives. Complete with Neo-Nazis, local politicians, and a miracle healer, *Terror 2000* relentlessly focuses on xenophobia after the German unification.

Christoph Schlingensief’s “*Deutschlandtrilogie*” evokes a small number of in-depth theoretical engagements. For example, the first installment, *100 Jahre Adolf Hitler – Die letzte Stunde im Führerbunker* (1989), is said to “make no claim to cleanse or redeem the world in the vein of heroic avant-gardism” (Hughes 323) as it “recuperate[es]...the last great age of German cinema [Weimar Cinema]” by displaying “modernist ideas about aesthetic autonomy” of New German Cinema (323-5). At the beginning of *100 Jahre Adolf Hitler* we see a quote from Wim Wenders from the 1987 Cannes Film Festival in which Wenders demanded “...die Bilder der Welt zu verbessern, um die Welt zu verbessern” [...to improve the images of the world to improve the world] (Elsaesser, *New German Cinema* 42-46). However, Hughes argues that Schlingensief’s choice to include Wenders’ quote bears no positive effect as the film is „almost unwatchable [due to] its ceaseless portrayal of neuroses, obesity, drug use, incest, blasphemy, and suicide“ (Hughes 323). Hughes describes both Wim Wenders and Wenders’ oeuvre as an aspiration to “sublime and transcendental heights....as a shining beacon for the improvement of everyday reality.” This is apparently lost as Schlingensief’s *Deutschlandtrilogie* is ultimately “a violent affront to the New German Cinema’s institutionalized aesthetic autonomy” (Hughes 323) because its images of the Nazi past “eclipse[s] their historical referent, thus vastly diminishing

that past's determining power vis-à-vis present national identity" (Hughes 319-20). In the same argument, Hughes also argues that three themes define Schlingensief's *Deutschlandtrilogie*, namely excess, entrapment, and autotelic violence. However, he quickly dismisses this (quite productive) observation when he claims that all these three characteristics accomplish is to portray "every image and every idea" as "self-destructive and ephemeral [in which] there is no overarching framework to provide coherence" (Hughes 324). What Hughes fails to consider in his analysis of the *Deutschlandtrilogie* is that Schlingensief may have never sought to establish coherence in the first place. Schlingensief was quite aware of his approach, otherwise he would not have referenced Wim Wenders at the 1987 Cannes Film Festival as part of his *100 Jahre Adolf Hitler*. Schlingensief's answer to Wenders' plea (to improve representation, that is, images of the world, in order to improve the world) was that it had to occur the other way around. One needs to first "improve the world," i.e. not have any more instances of xenophobic violence, divisive rhetoric, and exclusive treatment of those not considered "German," before we may again attempt at worrying about the aesthetic legacy the times will leave. In other words, Schlingensief was once again inextricably tying politics and sociocultural issues in late twentieth century Germany to what he deemed as the responsibility in the arts, namely to render both visible by any means necessary.

The second installment in the "Deutschlandtrilogie," *Das deutsche Kettensägenmassaker* (1990), evokes more supportive interpretation. The film portrays German reunification as a barbaric process. News of the opening of the Berlin Wall unleash a bestial blood rush in a West German butcher's family who indiscriminately slaughter, dismember, and cannibalize East Germans. However, the film is not simply an over-the-top remake of the 1974 *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. It forms the centerpiece of Schlingensief's "Deutschlandtrilogie" in which the

“German Left was ceding national identity to the Right” (Huysen 81). Schlingensief both confronted the potential return of “nationhood” and portrayed the underlying violent processes. The German author and film critic Georg Seeßlen writes in his article „Vom barbarischen Film zur nomadischen Politik” [“From Barbaric Film to Nomadic Politics”]: “Es ist also eine Ästhetik der Zerstörung...aber nicht die Zerstörung des Modernismus, die das Alte auslöschen will, sondern eine Zerstörung, die sich bereits selber zum Inhalt hat.“ [„It is then an aesthetics of destruction...but not the destruction of modernism that wishes to erase the old, but instead a destruction that already has itself as the content.“]

Seeßlen’s analysis seeks to more meticulously explore the rationale behind not just the *Kettensägenmassaker*, but also behind the entire trilogy and behind Schlingensief’s overall approach in film. An aesthetic “destruction that already has itself as the content” coupled with Schlingensief’s plot in the film suggests that in the artist’s mind, a productive reunification of Germany was only an idea. The excessive, autotelic violence seeks to draw attention to a critical state of existence (in Schlingensief’s mind) in post-1990 Germany, one that prevented East and West not just from mutually accepting one another, but from accepting anyone that may not fit within the “eastern” and “western” borders of a new Germany. Another theme in Schlingensief’s films is one of entrapment. *Tunguska*’s underground quarry and dark castle as well as the bunker maze and psychiatric institution in *Menu Total* are confining and unfamiliar spaces within which the main characters are forced to solve the issues that have befallen them. *Menu Total* also pushes questions of responsibility while *Tunguska* parallels one of the most controversial, and to this day, fully unsolved disasters to political elements (possibly even motivation) and aftermath of Germany’s involvement in the Second World War. As Schlingensief continued to grapple with Germany’s history and politics in the late twentieth

century, the following selection engages with a number of his actions and public interventions through the framework of postdramatic theater.

2.2 THE “POST” IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

2.2.1 Conceptualizing the elusive

The theoretical framework behind postdramatic theater is a productive discourse through which scholars engage with Christoph Schlingensiefel’s theater projects. Postdramatic theater began in the historical avant-garde in the early twentieth century and continued in the neo avant-garde of the 1950s. It signaled a transition from a “verbally predominant, narrative and sequentially structured poetics” to performance-oriented events that were distinguished by “plot-less, character-less, deconstructed, and fragmentary theatrical texts” (Kaynar 86). Hans-Thies Lehmann, German theater scholar and Professor Emeritus of Theater Studies at Goethe University, conceptualized the notion of “postdramatic theater” in his 1999 work *Postdramatisches Theater*. The work recognizes the emergence of new technologies and what Lehmann considers a historical shift from a text-based culture to a new media age in the second half of the twentieth century.

In the overview that follows, I elaborate on a set of characteristics that Lehmann attributes to postdramatic theater. They are the *retreat of synthesis*, *dream images*, *synaesthesia*, *performance text*, and *simultaneity*. Although I will engage with these elements in a particular order, it will become apparent through their definitions that they overlap and are best conceived as constantly interacting with one another. Lehmann defines characteristics of postdramatic

theater, or “postdramatic theatrical signs,” as including “all dimensions of signification” such as movement, gesture, and stage arrangement, for example. These signs must “demand attention...through the heightening of the performance” and contain “density without a fixed conceptual identity” (82). Lehmann argues that it is important to develop forms of analysis and discourse for that, which, “crudely put, remains non-sense in the signifiers” (Lehmann 82).

We may note here that a conceptual framework which strives to define unfixed parameters faces challenges from the outset. Because of this, Lehmann does not suggest a hierarchy or an order in which to discuss postdramatic theatrical signs. On the contrary, he often follows the same method he ascribes to postdramatic theater. Lehmann’s theory on postdramatic theater functions the same way the theatre itself does. Because of this, in addition to Lehmann’s conceptual framework, I include select contemporary scholarship that engages with *Postdramatisches Theater* and that helps clarify Lehmann’s ideas.

Lehmann defines theater as it began changing in the 1960s as the art of the event. Theater no longer remained the “narrow institutional branch” it once was as it became “a multi- or intermedially deconstructed artistic practice of the momentary event” (83, 104-7). A primary feature of postdramatic theater is the *retreat of synthesis*, or the “freedom to react arbitrarily and involuntarily and idiosyncratically” (82). Postdramatic theater “demand[s]” an “open and fragmenting perception in place of unifying and closed perception” (82, 86). “Reach[ing] beyond non-committal and entirely private engagement” (83), postdramatic theater finds open and fragmenting perception in “theatrical realization of freedom, freedom from subjection to hierarchies” (83-4). Lehman draws on chaos theory in this instance and states that postdramatic theater sacrifices synthesis to gain, in its place, “the density of intensive moments” (61-2, 83).

A result of the *retreat of synthesis*, according to Lehmann, are *dream images*. *Dream images* occur when a group of spectators are “made similar” through common contact. A community of “heterogenous and particular imaginations” produce a more liberal sphere of sharing and communicating that inherits the utopias of modernism (Lehmann 83-4). Lehmann calls on Mallarme who once wished the Paris newspapers would publish people’s dreams of actual events. The essential quality of *dream images* is the non-hierarchy of images, which is achieved through movements, collage, and montage, to name a few examples. In order to realize both the *retreat of synthesis* and *dream images*, postdramatic theater does away with conventional and institutionalized theater venues in favor of streets, abandoned buildings, and urban sites (Kaynar 88, Lehman 31). Postdramatic theater is therefore present where it is “usually not perceived” (Lehmann 30-31).

In another instance, Lehmann draws on the tradition of mannerism and argues that postmodern theater embraces *synaesthesia* because it has an “aversion to organic closure” and a tendency towards “extreme distortion, unsettling uncertainty, and paradox” (83). For example, in dramatic narration we have contiguity: a spoken line elicits a response or prompts movement from another actor. This motion may lead to further dialogue and events on stage, all of which ultimately form a cause-and-effect sequence of responses, dialogues, and events. In postmodern theater, there is a “disparate heterogeneity” instead in which any one detail may take place of the other. Lehmann partially draws on surrealist writing games and the Situationists International. Because “the human sensory apparatus does not easily tolerate disconnectedness” (Lehmann 84-5), it seeks out its own connections when deprived of some form of continuity, which ultimately may lead to new meaning or a connection, ultimately allowing one to see the same situation in a new light.

The renunciation of conventionalized theater forms such as unity, symmetrical structuring, or readability violates “liminal borders between fiction and reality, actor and role, parole and langue, [as well as] verbal and visual dramaturgy” (Kaynar 87, Lehmann 111-112). Postdramatic theater mix performance genres such as drama, burlesque, stand-up, poetry reciting, dance, and music, for example. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Professor of Theatre Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, pushes the notion of boundary distortion further. Her 2008 work *The Transformative Power of Performance – A New Aesthetics* traces the emergence of performance as an art event to set it on equal footing with the traditional art object. She frames the distorting of boundaries in live performance events (such as the blurring between artist and audience, for example) as breeding ground for a new way of understanding performing arts, and through them even wider social and cultural processes (Fischer-Lichte 11-24, 47-9).

The *retreat of synthesis* and *dream images* call for the fragmenting of perception in unconventional spaces among individuals made common through contact in the moment. *Synaesthesia* pushes distortion and disconnectedness, ultimately resulting in a mix of performance genres and the blurring between artist and audience. At this point, the *performance text* attains greater significance in postmodern theater. Usually, according to Lehmann, in a theater production we have linguistic text, the text of staging and the *mise en scene*, and the performance text. Performance text is the mode of relationship of the performance to the spectators, the temporal and spatial situation, and the place and function of the theatrical process within the social field. In other words, once a play or a form of theatrical production is occurring in real time, we are witnessing the performance text. Lehmann argues that in postmodern theater, the *performance text* “overdetermines the linguistic text [as well as] the text of staging and the *mise en scene*...causing more presence than representation, more process than product”

(Lehmann 85). The execution of the text in postdramatic theater is as imperative as the development of other scenic elements. In postdramatic theater, the focus is on the immediate reality of the spectators and their physical presence within the space, rather than what has already been planned with the help of the linguistic text and the text of staging and the *mise en scene* (145-7).

The elevation of the performance text leads to how postdramatic theater treats *simultaneity*. Dramatic theatre communicates certain signals to the audience in the form of a gesture, a word, or even a change in costume or makeup, to indicate progression of the plot. Usually only one or two of such signals occur on the stage at once. “The paratactical valency and ordering of postdramatic theatre” (Lehmann 87), on the other hand, strives to load so much onto its spectators that they cannot process everything at once. According to Lehmann, there is no hierarchy or particular order to which a work in postdramatic theater may communicate its elements and the objectives of the piece.

As mentioned earlier, postdramatic theater began in the historical avant-garde in the early twentieth century and continued in the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s. Postdramatic theater marked a transition from the “verbally predominant, narrative, and sequentially structured poetics” (Kaynar 86) to the “art of the event” (Lehmann 83, 105). The art of the event includes, among other characteristics, the retreat of synthesis, dream images, synaesthesia, performance text, and simultaneity. While the retreat of synthesis ensures that both the spectators and the participants (and even here, due to the notions of performance text and dream images, there may not be a distinguishing factor between the two) have the freedom to react arbitrarily, the concept of dream images connects a group of spectators (and, as indicated, possibly even the cast) solely through their common experience of a postdramatic work. An extension of the features of dream

images is that a postdramatic work is performed in non-traditional, non-institutionalized venues such as in abandoned buildings, on streets, and in open public spaces. The notion of synaesthesia in postdramatic theater represents both a lack of hierarchy and a disconnectedness in which one detail in the work may take place of another. Synaesthesia works together with the concept of simultaneity, through which any amount of information in a postdramatic piece may be communicated all at once, without a particular order. Both synaesthesia and simultaneity support the violation of borders between different performance genres and in some cases, between fiction and reality. Finally, the performance text in postdramatic theater focuses on the immediate reality of the participants and the spectators and their physical presence within the space/non-institutionalized venue. The sole emphasis on the execution of the text highlights the process of delivering information (in the form of lines, gestures, movements, and so on) in a postdramatic theater work rather than focusing on the objective(s) of the piece.

2.2.2 “Theater is confession.”

The following discussion highlights three works: *100 Jahre CDU – Spiel ohne Grenzen* [*100 Years CDU – A Game With No Limits*] (1993), *Rocky Dutschke '68* (1996), and *Wahlkampfzirkus – Chance 2000* [*Election Campaign Circus – Chance 2000*] (1998).

The 1993 work *100 Jahre CDU – Spiel ohne Grenzen* [*100 Years CDU – A Game With No Limits*] is a theater piece in which a game show raises money for two asylum seekers whose local residences have been burned down. The set consists of a large stage stairway in the middle, a podium with a microphone, and a few rows of seating off to the side. A general of the United Nations participates in the game show and bets that within ten minutes he can shoot a Turkish man from Kreuzberg in the head. A short while later he appears with a severed “hunting trophy”

onto the stage while another game-show candidate on a motorcycle attempts to jump over a number of steel lockers. As *100 Jahre CDU- Spiel ohne Grenzen* continues, the “candidates” massacre as part of bets, simulate orgasms, consume excrement for “the common good,” and then proceed to throw up at the dignitaries from the political, economic, ecumenical, and cultural sectors who are present. To conclude, the audience witnesses an imitation of Christ carrying the cross in which the actor portraying Christ carries a weapon and shouts at the top of his lungs: “Deutschland muss härter werden!” [“Germany must become tougher!”] A poster of Christoph Schlingensief with a crown of thorns simultaneously appears in the background.

100 Jahre CDU – Spiel ohne Grenzen theatrically mirrors political and social aspects of Schlingensief’s *Deutschlandtrilogie* (1989-1992). The backstory in which two asylum seeker’s residences were burned down references the Rostock-Lichtenhagen riots that occurred from August 22 until August 24, 1992. Over a two-day period, several hundred right-wing extremists continuously threw petrol bombs and barricaded the Central Refugee Shelter that housed over five thousand asylum seekers (*1993 Parlamentarischer Untersuchungsausschuss des Landtags M-V, Spiegel*) in the Lichtenhagen district of Rostock, Germany. Although no deaths were reported, the magnitude of the attacks, the participation of the public (at one point onlookers clapped as a group of Neo-Nazis threw stones at the shelter), and the slow response on part of the authorities resulted in a decade-long prosecution of over two hundred people. In addition to placing this occurrence (or rather, this type of occurrence) in the center of *100 Jahre CDU*, Schlingensief escalates his political commentary by involving the United Nations in the piece. In addition to Germany and the reigning political party (the Christian Democratic Union under Helmut Kohl), Schlingensief also holds the international organization directly responsible for the mistreatment and, in many cases, murder of refugees and asylum seekers.

Three years later Schlingensief created the piece *Rocky Dutschke '68*. Part of the 1996 piece was a sit-in that occurred outside of the Volksbühne at the Rosa Luxemburg-Platz in Berlin. The piece began with a reenactment of Rudy Dutschke's assassination attempt. Members of the ensemble controlled the reenactment with a megaphone as the visitors and pedestrians who happened to walk by the performance mixed together with the actors and so became a part of the happening. After some time the core group of actors asked everyone to join them inside the theater in which a tent symbolized Dutschke's parental home while a blackboard (on which the words "Fragen des Gehirns [Questions of a brain]" were written) and a backdrop of a dreary, decrepit row of houses filled out the stage. The core ensemble then prompted those who had returned inside to choose a spot underneath signs bearing titles such as "Art," "Religion," and "Politics." The core group of actors assumed the role of school staff and interrogated the audience (the "students") in an attempt to bring about argument.

Rocky Dutschke '68 was the first theater work in which Christoph Schlingensief orchestrated direct encounters with the public (Giles 17). In the spirit of postdramatic theater, in particular the elements of dream images and performance text, Schlingensief offered spectators the opportunity to directly participate in the "communal experience – outside the theatre, and outside the norms of dramatic representation – as well as deliberately confounding easy political messages" (Giles 12). Another postdramatic element of *Rocky Dutschke* are the notions of synaesthesia and simultaneity. Schlingensief's deliberate and "strategic ambiguity" results in performers neither rejecting nor affirming their adopted activist role models. Rather, "the performance opens up a space of ambiguity" during which the audience must "critically reassess the inheritance of the activism of 1968," such as the movement's "failure to achieve most of the

activists' main goals, such as radically changing the existing political system, and also the ongoing potential of such activism" (Dietze 131).

The 1998 *Wahlkampfzirkus – Chance 2000* was Christoph Schlingensief's first elaborate postdramatic work. With this project, Schlingensief developed his approach of establishing conditions that provide a space to the usually excluded. *Wahlkampfzirkus – Chance 2000* consisted of multiple parts, beginning as the association *Chance2000 e.V.* in January 1998 in connection with the ongoing German election campaigns. The association defined itself as a forum for the unemployed, physically and psychologically handicapped, and other marginalized characters who felt they were left out of consideration by the actual political parties in the election campaign. Under the motto "Wähle dich selbst" ["Vote for yourself"] Schlingensief encouraged people to put themselves forward as independent candidates in the German election that took place on September 27, 1998.

For those who did not wish to put themselves forward as independent candidates, Schlingensief founded the political party *Chance2000* in March 1998 in a circus tent next to the Prater, the primary stage of the Volksbühne Theater in Berlin. Schlingensief's make-shift political party *Chance2000* had its own daily repertoire which included participation by a real circus family, Circus Sperlich. Schlingensief joined the circus performance by riding on a pony at regular intervals through the ring, shouting: "Our evening is more political than it looks... We have theatrical parts, and we have political parts, and now the question is, when is what what" (Irene Albers, 1999, "Scheitern als Chance..."). The ring itself was embellished with two giant boards where on one side it said "art" and on the other "politics" (Gade 37).

One afternoon *Chance2000* also organized a media-covered excursion to the department store KaDeWe at which Schlingensief and "his army of handicapped, unemployed, and

homeless, all dressed in T-shirts with “Chance2000” printed on the chest” (39), position[ed] themselves outside and applauded shoppers as they entered or left the department store. Although everyone was ultimately apprehended and shortly removed from outside of KaDeWe, two days later Schlingensief urged Germany’s six million unemployed people to go swimming together in Lake Wolfgang to raise the water level and flood Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s lakeside summer home (Young 78).

In one of the final acts, Schlingensief and the members of *Chance2000* founded “Hotel Prora,” a ten-day long live-in arrangement at the theatre Prater that allowed *Chance2000* to practice “collective eating over political discussions” and, most importantly, collect signatures for the party. Thus, *Chance2000* was officially accepted as a political party in mid-summer 1998 (Gade 35). Last but certainly not least, *Wahlkampfzirkus – Chance 2000* also consisted of several performances, appearances on television, establishment of think-thanks online, and “actually also the imminent liquidation of the party. Before it went that far, however, the party was put up for sale, and its further existence was guaranteed thanks to fashion designer Wolfgang Joop. In the September 1998 election in Germany, the party *Chance2000* took 28,500 votes” (Gade 35).

Chance 2000 relied on several different forms of performance types such as circus, theatre, party foundation, revivalist meeting, talk show, freak show, sales show, democracy education, etc. in a “social experimental arrangement which took place over most of a year” (Gade 32). It is viewed as a “genre hybrid between circus, theatre, and party funding” (Rune Gade and Jerslev 12), as it is reminiscent of works by directors and art teams such as Rene Pollesch, Hans Werner Kroesinger, Gob Squad, and Rimini Protokoll, individuals and groups that have abandoned a conventional notion of theatre to work “within the framework of an extended theatrical concept” (Gade 19). Instead of offering illusion, psychological realism, or a

clear plot with a beginning, middle, and an end, “the chief point in the performances of these artists...is the processual aspect and the meaning-generating interaction between performers and audience” (19). The artists are connected by a specific political or ideology-critical commitment that explicitly express itself in their works.

Solveig Gade terms Schlingensief’s approach in the year-long *Wahlkampfzirkus – Chance 2000* as an “activistic genre hybrid” that follows three principles. First, it positions itself in a state suspended between art and reality. Second are the “continuous proliferations,” unpredictability and interaction with the audience. Third, Schlingensief’s approach both uses and displaces the discourses and ideologies of media society. (35). Balancing in a state between “the work (of art) and the (real) event” (39), in *Wahlkampfzirkus*, according to Gade, the value of the audience’s cooperation lies in “drawing the spectators’ attention to the general performance character of society, thereby enabling them to *act* in this society” (Gade 39, emphasis author’s own). In the same argument, Gade relies on Irene Albers’ analysis in her article “Scheitern als Chance (1999)” when commenting on how Schlingensief developed his own “system theory” with *Wahlkampfzirkus – Chance 2000*. For Schlingensief, System 1 includes all “reality” as created by the media, the unions, the parties, and art, to name a few. By default, as Gade states, System 1 excludes members of System 2, the “invisible” people such as the handicapped, the unemployed, and the marginalized members of society. With *Wahlkampfzirkus* Schlingensief’s party strove to establish a third system from where one “one can subversively relate to system 1” (Gade 39, 44).

Schlingensief purposefully collided several framing devices within a single performance. For example, in *Chance2000* it was “impossible for the spectators to determine with certainty what kind of event they were attending” (Fischer-Lichte 47). Was it a theatre performance (by

virtue of it being a Volksbühne production with tickets being sold at its box office)? Was it a circus (indicated by the venue and by the participation of the circus family Sperlich)? Was it a “freak-show” (perhaps suggested by the inclusion of mentally and physically disabled performers who were partly treated roughly) or maybe even just a talk-show (since several interviews were conducted in the course of the performance)? Could one describe it as a political event? During *Chance 2000* two or three event types occurred, initially complementing one another only to immediately contrast, and even undermine each other.

This collision and disruption of frames repeatedly put the audience in situations in which they were not able to react “automatically,” that is, according to a set of established rules. Instead, “the spectator had to make choices and evaluations about each frame” (Fischer-Lichte 48). Such an unpredictability in the relationship between performer and audience member caused the spectators to experience “the simultaneous power and impotence of their responses” (48-9).

2.3 “ES IST EINE BILDERSTÖRUNGSMASCHINE GEWESEN.” [“IT WAS AN IMAGERY-DISTURBANCE-MACHINE.”]

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is no shortage of strong opinions on both Christoph Schlingensiefel and his works, and it continues with *Ausländer Raus!* “One of the most famous of his public interventions” (Schmidt 27), *Bitte liebt Österreich – Österreichs erste Koalitionswoche* outlives Schlingensiefel (and his other theatrical projects which were not recorded) “thanks to the availability of an excellent documentary film by Paul Poet (2002)” (Schmidt 27-8). Schlingensiefel “upped the ante” (Young 78) with *Bitte liebt Österreich – Österreichs erste Koalitionswoche* during the 2000 Wiener Festwochen, responding to a “far-

right turn in Austrian politics by constructing a simulation of a detention centre in a prominent public square in Vienna, populating it with twelve people whom Schlingensiefel claimed were seeking asylum in Austria at that time” (Schmidt 28). “In the tradition of his own tasteless imitations of lowbrow television formats, [Schlingensiefel] filmed and screened the reality-TV goings-on inside the containers...” (Young 79). However, he “meant well and sought to dismember the cultural apparatus and turn it to his own, socially progressive ends” (Young 79).

Before I continue with the current scholarship and my own analyses of *Ausländer Raus!*, I am going to provide a brief overview of the summer 2000 happening so that we may have a better perspective of when and how certain events transpired. This is because no account of the event apart from a brief one- to two-statement summary accompanies the theoretical discussions that engage with *Ausländer Raus!* My description is based upon information and scenes from Paul Poet’s 2001 documentary.

In the first week of June 2000, Schlingensiefel’s team built Big-Brother-inspired living containers next to the Vienna Opera House, complete with a small kitchen, bathroom, living room, and a bedroom. Per Poet’s arrangement, internet TV pioneer webfreetv.com set up six cameras in fixed locations that broadcasted the production and the accompanying occurrences around the clock for the duration of the happening.

On Day 1 of the event, a bus whose windows were covered completely with old newspapers brought twelve refugee applicants to the location. The asylum seekers hailed from China, Iran, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kurdistan, and Sri Lanka amongst other far-flung countries, and upon arrival they exited the bus one by one, each one of them wearing colorful wigs and shielding their faces with magazines and newspapers. Subtitles reveal to the viewer that the asylum seekers would “suffer great consequences” if their real identities were shown on camera.

Once the bus arrived on location next to the Vienna Opera House, two heavysset men with “security” stamped on the back of their black t-shirts accompanied each asylum seeker until s/he was inside the container. As each person is exiting the bus, a traditional brass band is playing a folk tune while Schlingensief reads off the individual’s short biography.

Beginning with Day 1, each participant’s detailed biography was available on the webfreetv.com website. The cameras were there to film the asylum seekers’ every move and beginning with Day 2, every morning the audience, pedestrians, as well as the refugee applicants watched a new five-minute video summarizing the events from the day before. Schlingensief urged the Austrian public to use the biographies and detailed up-to-date status information of the applicants together with the 24-hour surveillance to vote out their least favorite refugee every night on the website. The winner, as Schlingensief repeated every day, would be awarded with a large sum of money and permanent residence status in Austria. This promise was a provocation which Schlingensief could not have offered.

The asylum seekers lived in the shipping containers for six days. They ate, slept, danced, and played board games. They exercised on top of the containers on a makeshift rooftop patio. Each day *Ausländer Raus!* hosted a “celebrity” who came and either held a speech for the public on top of the container or directly interacted with the asylum seekers. On Day 4, Elfriede Jelinek visited the happening. Since the asylum seekers had been taking German lessons with an instructor, Jelinek then worked together with them in completing a “final project” for the class – a puppet show for the public for which the refugee applicants had composed the text.

Public reaction was mild at first, but it changed after the third day. As journalistic coverage snowballed, emotions ran high on location in the heat of summer as casual onlookers, students, retirees, people on their way home from work, to name a few, clashed with one another

as they engaged in a debate about the event. Over eight hundred thousand online posts appeared in six days as leftwing demonstrators and rightwing radicals filled chats and forums on webfreetv.com. Numerous hacking attempts, one of them by the "Bruderschaft für Recht und Ordnung" ["Brotherhood for Justice and Order"] at times crashed the site, to the point where Schlingensief and his team were forced to launch an additional site under the domain name "www.auslaenderraus.at" (which incidentally changed the servers' location to Canada). As Paul Poet writes, "[v]om australischen Hippie-Fanclub, konservativen Frankfurter Geschäftsleuten bis zu slowenischen Nazi-Skins: Alle vereinten sich in diesem absurden Szenario zu gemeinsamer Kommunikation und Selbstentblößung" ["From an Australian hippie-fan club to conservative Frankfurt businessmen and Slovenian Nazi-skins: everyone united in this absurd scenario for collective communication and self-degradation"] (RealFictionFilme).

In addition to verbal disagreements, on Day 5 there was an attempted fire-bombing that occurred shortly before a left-wing group climbed on top of the container and took down the "Ausländer Raus!" sign. On Day 6, Schlingensief's team replaced the sign with another (identical) one and brought the asylum seekers back into the container (they were momentarily evacuated the evening before out of safety concerns). Schlingensief and his team completed the happening on Day 7 "with the help of the public" as the last remaining asylum seeker received an envelope that was tied to a few helium-filled balloons. As the individual reaches out to get a hold of the balloon bunch, Schlingensief releases it ahead of time and the camera pans to follow its flight path.

2.3.1 Only the “hyper-“ and the “over-“ suffice

A small number of scholarly works engage theoretically and in-depth with Christoph Schlingensiefel's 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* [*Please love Austria – First Austrian Coalition Week*] as seen through the 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefels Container* [*Foreigners Out! Schlingensiefel's Container*]. In the following discussion, I will outline three such approaches.

In his 2014 work *Theatrical Public Sphere*, chair in Theatre Studies at the University of Munich Christopher Balme contextualizes theatre as an institution between the shifting borders of the private and public, between reasoned debate and antagonistic intervention. Balme applies Jürgen Habermas' concept of the public sphere to the history of theatrical performances beginning with the fifteenth century. One of Balme's concepts is “distributed aesthetics” - when the theatrical public sphere coexists both inside and outside the theater. One of the catalysts for “distributed aesthetics” is the “virtual world of the internet” (Balme 20). According to Balme, harnessing the internet as a way of interacting with an imagined public allows theatre and the public sphere to reconnect and in some instances, even merge.

Christopher Balme applies his notion of distributed aesthetics to Schlingensiefel's container action *Bitte liebt Österreich*. Describing it as an event of “ludic overidentification” (Balme 178), Balme echoes Hans Thies Lehmann's postdramatic theater concepts of the retreat of synthesis and synaesthesia, among others, as he focuses on Schlingensiefel's radical rearranging of the conventional devices. Balme does not reference Lehmann's framework, however, and instead draws on Slavoj Žižek's term of “overidentification.” Adapted from a Lacanian framework, “overidentification” refers to a mode of political intervention and resistance where an idea or issue is not directly opposed but affirmatively embraced and given form in a

hypertrophic version. Žižek argues that “power relies on its inherent transgression” (Žižek 219). If one “overidentif[ies] with the explicit power discourse [by] taking the power discourse at its (public) word, acting as if it really means what it explicitly says (and promises),” it may be “the most effective way of disturbing its smooth functioning” (Žižek 219-20).

Balme employs this concept of “overidentification” to argue that Schlingensief used it as an interventionist strategy in that it “employs subversive mimicry to generate unease among those not directly involved in the artistic work” (Balme 180). Schlingensief took Jörg Haider and the Austrian Freedom Party’s political platform “at its (public) word” (16) when he expelled the asylum seekers during the happening. In other words, the “reality” of the political platform played out in a theatrical mode during Schlingensief’s container happening. This made it unclear as to what happened to the asylum seekers once they left the space next to the Vienna Opera House. Based upon Paul Poet’s documentary, it is only evident that the asylum seekers entered a car and were driven away. Whether they went back to an “actual” asylum center or to the original location from where they came is not revealed. Another example of Žižek’s concept of overidentification, as Balme argues, was the moment during which the group of left-wing protesters stormed the containers and proceeded to kick and rip apart the sign “Ausländer Raus” before completely removing it and entering the container to “liberate” the asylum seekers.

In his article “Christoph Schlingensief and the Bad Spectacle,” writer and performer Theron Schmidt argues that Schlingensief’s *Ausländer Raus!* is a theatrical project rather than a political project in any tradition sense, and that this “distinction permits a certain amount of ethical irresponsibility: (Schmidt 31). That is why, Schmidt argues, “the spectre of state fascism does not so much lurk behind the scene as walk blatantly amongst it“ (30). In other words, because Schlingensief conceived of *Ausländer Raus!* as a theater happening, he can get away

with both “holding” the asylum seekers for seven days and with having the phrase “Ausländer Raus!” grace the top of the containers. Consequently, as Schmidt continues to argue, Schlingensiefel’s work may be called a “politics of appearance, in which the conditions of representation are not regarded as that which must be overcome for a meaningful politics to emerge, but are themselves the domain of politics” (Schmidt 28). The project “deliberately frustrates the processes of identification” and in which “we” exists as a disputed concept, as a fiction, as something not yet determined rather than as a reliable category in relation to which one can either belong or remove oneself” (Schmidt 30).

Schmidt also uses Jean-Luc Nancy’s *Being Singular Plural* to engage in his article, specifically Nancy’s arguments about the relationship between spectacle and community, which Schmidt claims are “particularly relevant because they are conceived with an explicit awareness of the threat of totalitarianism” (Schmidt 29-30). In *Being Singular Plural*, Nancy draws on the idea of “there is no society without spectacle” by evoking Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Guy Debord. Nancy counters both by stating the binary notions of “good” and “bad” spectacles are misconceived. Nancy argues that the only basis for an idea of community, the spectacle of community is all there is (Schmidt 30).

In her article “Performing like an asylum seeker: paradoxes of hyper-authenticity,” Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Warwick Silviya Jestrović engages with the concept of the “the hyper-authentic” in *Ausländer Raus!* Inspired by Jean Baudrillard’s concept of the hyperreal, Jestrović argues that the “hyper-authentic” occurs when “real people are expected to perform their own authenticity,” and where this authenticity of the subject is “partly constructed through the gaze of the beholder” (Jestrović 160). The “hyper-authentic” in a performance therefore features “real people” as there is no distinction between the subjectivity of

the performer on and off “stage.” Jestrović argues that unlike Baudrillard’s hyperreal, where the relationship between the signified and the signifier is deemed obsolete, the hyper-authentic “still carries tension between presence and representation, theatricality and performativity, immediacy and mediation.” Jestrović explains that the use of the hyphen is there to indicate the tensions in the dualities, therefore being something that “has not yet fully rid itself of its semiotic roots.” Furthermore, Jestrović deems the hyper-authentic in Schlingensief’s *Ausländer Raus!* as a mediated presence: “...it is not only a matter of *being* an asylum seeker, a refugee, or an immigrant, but also of *performing* accordingly in order not to be rendered bogus” (Jestrović 160-1, emphasis author’s own). Jestrović argues that the parameters of proving one’s “refugeedom” is the same in a legal system as well as in performance art – one has to “pitch his/her experience” so that it comes across as convincing and valid.”

Silvija Jestrović describes *Ausländer Raus!* as a “public project,” a “mock process where...one asylum seeker would “win” the coveted prize: an Austrian spouse and the legal right to remain in Austria” (Jestrović 159). The happening belongs to what Jestrović claims is the “middle sphere of exilic performances – works that rely neither on “unmediated presence and sharing of experiences” nor on “mainstream theatre and drama that feature fictionalized and often romanticized embodiments of exilic figures” (159). Jestrović also argues that the “subversions of asylum identities were limited, since the people in the container were not in control of the performance” (166). Instead, Schlingensief portrayed the refugees as a “metonymic embodiment of the xenophobic approach towards immigrants in a morality play staged for the outside world” (167). Jestrović specifically draws on the moment when the Austrian Nobel laureate Elfride Jelinek announced to the crowd assembled outside of the

happening that the asylum seekers had put together a puppet show about asylum. Such a “metatheatrical episode made the parallel between puppets and asylum seekers obvious” (167).

There are several noteworthy approaches we may consider. Christopher Balme’s notion of distributed aesthetics addresses the difficulty in synthesizing the theater/theatrical performance as well as between the political and public aspects in *Ausländer Raus!* Balme’s theatrical public sphere exists both inside and outside the theater and as such, it mediates the complex interaction between the asylum seekers and their portrayed identities and the engaging public/“non-asylum seekers” who are responding to the political framework set up next to the Vienna Opera House. In order to elaborate on the concept of distributed aesthetics, that is, in order to show that the theatrical public sphere exists in- and outside the theater, we need a close reading of a scene in *Ausländer Raus!*, which Balme does not provide. Furthermore, Balme directly draws on the postdramatic notion of crossing of performance genres, among others, but he neither recognizes the discourse nor does he carry through with it with an example from the happening.

There are other issues here. Balme claims that Schlingensiefel used the participants to represent “the larger whole of foreigners...on the basis of their physical appearance and biographies (which were actually faked)” (181-2). “The use of [these] people,” Balme continues, made the “inmates of the container appear to come from those geographical areas most commonly associated with refugees: Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia” (181). A little later Balme contradicts himself as he states that “the refugees were apparently real and therefore metonymically connected to the larger group” (183). Stating that there are “geographical areas most commonly associated with refugees” attributes a specific political and socioeconomic reputation to certain parts of the world. This is further exacerbated by Balme’s semantic

distinction between the rights of “asylum seekers” and “*normal* immigrants” (emphasis my own), which once more upholds the widely-accepted barometer of which migrants count as “regular” and which count as “irregular.”

Both Christopher Balme and Theron Schmidt echo Slavoj Žižek’s concept of over-identification, that is, the affirmation of a political idea or a power discourse down to its public word. While Balme suggests that the political idea in *Ausländer Raus!*, that is Jörg Haider’s party, may be disturbed, he does not explain how this occurs, and if there are any consequences. Similarly, Schmidt makes a productive observation that the conditions of representation in *Ausländer Raus!* are not something to overcome as they are the domain of politics. However, he does not elaborate as to possibly why or how this is achieved. Schmidt accepts at face value what Schlingensiefel states throughout Paul Poet’s documentary, namely that protests and solutions do not interest him as there are both ineffective and unrealistic, but Schmidt does not outline the details from *Ausländer Raus!* as to how over-identification functions in the piece. Finally, Silvija Jestrović’s model of the hyper-authentic successfully elaborates on the asylum seeker’s position in *Ausländer Raus!* Jestrović argues how the core group of both the 2000 happening and the 2001 documentary, namely the asylum seekers, never speak for the seven days and ninety minutes, respectively. The perspective of the asylum seekers is a construction throughout the entire happening.

2.3.2 “Es ist etwas offenbar geworden.” [“Something has become apparent.”] – Exposing statist normativity

In the beginning of Paul Poet’s documentary, we see a black-and-white spinning globe and hear the 1936 song “Die Welt in 100 Jahren (ein Zukunftsbild)” [“The World in 100 Years (an image

of the future)"] by the duo Hermann Leopoldi and Betja Milskaja. The frame shows documentary black-and-white footage of World War II convoys, including the faces of generals, foot soldiers, and a brief snapshot of a border patrol sign (the location is not specified). A voiceover explains satirically that Austria, while having been both a participant and victim in the National Socialist sphere of influence during World War II, also managed to build quickly an independent democracy afterwards. The sequence of this portion underlines that although Austria was a welfare state, it has yet to reflect extensively on its National Socialist past. As the frame cuts to show a sign for "Bundesministerium für Handel und Wiederaufbau; Wiederaufbau Staatsoper" ["Federal Ministry for Trade and Rehabilitation; Reconstruction of the State Opera], the voiceover continues to explain how both the Social Democratic Party and the Christian Socialist Party in Austria built "the most secure" welfare state in the world. In the middle of the 80s, however, the "Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs" (FPÖ) [Freedom Party of Austria] rose as the "third power" with 23.6% of the votes. After a bar-chart is superimposed depicting the percentage breakdown of all the parties in Austria at the time, the camera shows slow-motion images of a black-tie ballroom dance followed by part of a racing car commercial and families skiing down a snow-covered mountain (a reference to Jörg Haider as an avid skier and racecar driver who died in an accident after skiing). Leopoldi and Milskaja's singing comes to a slow stop and in the next frame, we hear the voiceover state the following: "'4. Februar 2000. Das Bild des gemütlichen Waltzerlandes zerbricht vor der Welt" [February 4, 2000. The image of the cozy country of Waltz falls apart in front of the world]. Poet's documentary now displays part of a news broadcast that aired that day on the Austrian Broadcasting Channel ORF, "Österreichischer Rundfunk." A somber journalist stares into the camera and informs the viewers that "in approximately twenty minutes" Austria's chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel will go against

the president's wishes and form a coalition with the "xenophobic FPÖ." The chapter ends with parts of various other news segments that document the ensuing protests against the coalition, including the storming of a major theatre and hotel. Lastly, the camera frame catches a billboard advertisement with a picture of an FPÖ politician. The caption reads: "Dr. Helene Partik-Pable – Die einzige Alternative / "AUSLÄNDER: Ich verstehe die Sorgen der Wiener"" [Dr. Helene Partik-Pable – the only alternative / "FOREIGNERS: I understand the concerns of the Viennese""].

This entire opening sequence illustrates a significant turning point in Austria's history at the turn of the millennium. The historical summary of Austria as a "gemütliches Waltzerland" was only a cover for an otherwise volatile legal and political set of developments, which ultimately called a xenophobic, right-wing party into power. Poet's deliberate use of the song "Die Welt in 100 Jahren" mocks the viewer who believes that Austria truly dealt with its Nazi past. Sung by a duo that included one Russian-born émigré, the song not only originated as the National Socialist party was rising to power in Germany, it also abstractly looked to a future that, as it is reached and depicted through Paul Poet's documentary, reveals anything but progress and "rehabilitation." What once seemed as an impossible win for Jörg Haider and the FPÖ resulted in a live television moment where even the news reporter could fully believe what he was expressing to the audience on the evening of February 4, 2000. Finally, the billboard advertisements with anti-foreigner captions directly reflect the regression in Austria's public sphere: a reactive, one-sided identification of individuals who crossed the national border into Austria are labeled collectively as a "worry of the Viennese."

The film chapter "Transport into the Container" chronicles the local journey of the twelve asylum seekers to Schlingensiefel's containers. The frame first shows an extreme close up of the

website “www.auslaenderraus.at” being typed out before it cuts to a scene on a street in Vienna. A number of individuals are shown boarding a bus. They are wearing wigs and are carrying small pieces of luggage with them. The camera intermittently cuts between showing the asylum seekers take their seats on the bus and briefly flashing parts of their biographies from the website “webfreetv.com.” In the next frame, visually we are outside of the living containers where a small and curious crowd has gathered to observe what is about to happen. We hear Christoph Schlingensief, who is standing on top of one of the containers, explain to the public what they will witness over the next few days. After describing the living arrangements, and the “Spielregeln” (rules of the game), Schlingensief emphasizes that “Austrians” can vote off their “favorite asylum seeker” that they “hate the most.” Before the camera cuts to a brief commentary by the event’s project manager Claudia Kaloff, Schlingensief ensures the crowd that every refugee that is voted out every night will indeed be brought to the Austrian border and thrown out of the country. Kaloff confirms that these were “tatsächliche Asylbewerber” [“actual/real asylum seekers”]. On the bus one of the Schlingensief aids explains to the asylum seekers in English that the “women will exit the bus first.” She then takes roll call to make sure that all twelve applicants are present. Once the camera cuts to the audience that has gathered outside of the containers, it briefly pans over the crowd to show a small orchestra playing a traditional folk tune as the asylum applicants are exiting the bus.

This portion of the documentary collapses the legal and personal identities of the asylum seekers. The absence of the actual asylum seekers is evident immediately in the beginning. The title “Transport into the Container” also dismisses the human, individual aspect of a group of people who form the focus of the project. The notion of “transporting” presupposes that it involves either an inanimate object or an animal. Furthermore, the refugees do not speak directly

either about or for themselves. When there is an opportunity to identify them visually or textually, their identifying characteristics are severely limiting. Similarly, the use of shipping containers categorizes those who are being “transported” as a product or as a commodity that is “to be dealt with” in manner decided by those doing the operational element of the transport. Paul Poet further emphasizes this by showing the refugee applicants enter the bus on an unidentified, random street in the center of Vienna. Their journey has no autonomous beginning in the sense that the audience does not witness from where they left, whether it was an apartment or another facility. Onboard the bus the asylum seekers’ identity is further distorted by the colorful wigs and the covered windows. In fact, the camera not once lingers on the face of a refugee, and in the rare instant that it does happen, the frame does so by showing a photocopy of a mug-shot style photograph of the migrant whose eyes have a black bar over them.

Schlingensief’s announcement that he is about to explain the “rules of the game” juxtaposed with Kaloff’s statement that we are indeed watching “real asylum applicants” distorts the boundaries between the theatrical and the documentary aspects. This retreat of synthesis on part of Schlingensief eradicates the possibility of making an ultimate assessment about whether what “we,” the audience in front of the containers between June 11 and June 17, 2000, and “we,” the audience watching the documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container* are witnessing. There are rules of the game, but there are also real refugees. There are “actual” security guards walking around the container with German shepherds but the container they are protecting houses artificially made living arrangements. The asylum seekers’ existence is “real” enough so that they may be voted off online, but neither the container nor the documentary audience sees them cross the national border. Such a specifically designed ambiguity produces an effect that Schlingensief himself describes as a “Hefekuchen” [yeast cake] mere minutes after

the refugees are all locked up in the container. The yeast cake that is the happening “has snuck up underneath the audience” and as it grows it does not allow one to either “stand” or “fall of one’s own volition.” Poet documents this to the point where Schlingensiefel describes it as a “virus” that has “made itself independent.” “The ideal economic product,” he continues, “that has been pushed out into the world and that is capable of snowballing on its own” without any direct assistance.

As Schlingensiefel continues to talk on the loudspeaker in front of the container, the film shows a crowd growing increasingly more immobilized. Most stand, some stare, some have their hand over their mouths in disbelief, and the occasional tourist works up the courage to snap a photo or two. Schlingensiefel tells the happening participants: “Ich wünsche Ihnen im Namen Europas alles Gute” [“I wish you all the best in the name of Europe”] and once more repeats the “rules and regulations” that in due course will allow one “finalist” to remain in Austria permanently. The next day Schlingensiefel returns to the same spot to announce the first “deportation” in the following manner: “Jetzt kommt es also zu dem Akt, der real ist. Ich sage es noch einmal, es ist eine Wiener Festwochen Inszenierung. Es ist ein Schauspieler. Es ist absolute Wahrheit” [Now we are getting closer to the act that’s real. I will say it once again, this is a Wiener Festwochen production. This is an actor. This is absolute truth”].

In these few moments, several postdramatic devices are evident. Schlingensiefel offers neither clarification nor does he attempt to logically connect the performance aspect of the Wiener Festwochen “production” to the “absolute truth.” In fact, as Lehmann outlined in his exposition on simultaneity and synaesthesia, one detail may readily take the place of another, and in this case, the “absolute truth” of the asylum seekers being up for deportation takes center stage in the *Ausländer Raus!* happening. The “theater event” takes the place of “the absolute truth” as

the two continuously highlight one another. Schlingensief and his crew embrace the ideas and approaches of the FPÖ and give these a space to be broadcasted. The overidentification of the ideals Jörg Haider's party in the form of the arrival of the asylum seekers, the public's consistent online watch and decision as to whom will get to leave, the posters of direct quotes from FPÖ members that were hung around the containers, and the persistence on part of the entire Schlingensief crew to keep the event going for as long as possible highlights the normativity of the entire sociopolitical mechanism in Austria at the time.

Four days into *Ausländer Raus!* After increasingly hostile interactions between visitors, onlookers, and random pedestrians in front of the containers, the behavior of one group stood out. The cumulative effect of the peep-show, the containment of the refugee applicants, and most of all, the blatant verbal and visual reminders of Austria's xenophobic coalition contributed to a climax that even Schlingensief couldn't predict. A group that called itself "Die antifaschistische Front" ["The anti-fascist front"] arrived at the happening and began climbing the walls of the container. Their goal was to destroy the sign "Ausländer Raus!" alongside posters that were hung onto the outside of the containers. Quotes such as "Wien darf nicht Chicago werden" ["Vienna cannot become Chicago"] and "Stop die Überfremdung" [Stop foreign infiltration] came down as demonstrators continuously yelled "Widerstand!" and began to spray-paint "Widerstandskampf" [fight of opposition] onto the "Ausländer Raus!" sign. The camera catches a glimpse of a very calm, yet disappointed Schlingensief as he watches the scene unfold. A little while later a delegation of six demonstrators enters the containers and informs the asylum applicants that they wish to "liberate them." Schlingensief and the refugees play along, and the camera records as everyone is led out of the containers, brought into a car, and driven away.

Schlingensiefel grabs the microphone and thanks the public, stating that it was ultimately it, and not the responsible political party, that liberated the inhabitants of the container.

This scene in the documentary clearly shows how the negotiation of officially assigned parameters was out of the asylum seekers' hands. The refugees that are part of *Ausländer Raus!* neither have a say as to how they enter nor as to how they leave their Big-Brother inspired housing. As demonstrators begin climbing the walls of the containers, the camera captures the asylum seekers peeking through a window with shocked and scared looks on their faces. In fact, as the protestors emerge on top of the containers victoriously and begin jumping up and down, we hear one of Schlingensiefel's assistants comment how at that moment everyone was scared that the roof may cave in and that everyone would be seriously hurt. What's more, the demonstrators had completely missed the point of the happening. By removing the quotes and by damaging the sign "Ausländer Raus!" they did the new Austrian coalition a favor by "proving" that no, Austria's public will not stand for such xenophobia. It was exactly that type of a "cleanup" that Schlingensiefel wished to avoid because then it meant that the exposure of the social, economic, and political parameters being imposed upon individuals such as the refugees would stop.

The above scene materializes in Paul Poet's documentary through Žižek's concept of overidentification as well as several postdramatic theater devices. The committed "liberation" of the asylum seekers on part of "The anti-fascist front" played directly (in)to Schlingensiefel's theatrical reflection of the political mechanism that was Jörg Haider and his party. The postdramatic device that is the retreat of synthesis erased the line between spectator and participant in the exact moment the protestors crossed into the territory of the container. Furthermore, Lehmann's ideas of synaesthesia and simultaneity, as reflected in both Schlingensiefel's happening and Paul Poet's documentation, exposed layers of politics and

performance and communicated these all at once. The slogans uttered by members of the FPÖ/ÖVP plastered the fence surrounding the containers at the same time the asylum seekers lived their daily routines, which included a daily wake-up call through parts of recordings from Jörg Haider's speeches. The film captures the asylum seekers looking outside of the container windows as the protestors climb the outside walls and begin tearing down the *Ausländer Raus!* sign, which Poet immediately follows with a three-second frame of a very disappointed Schlingensiefel looking out into a cheering crowd. In other words, *Ausländer Raus!* embodies the characteristics of a postdramatic work throughout, and it needs these elements to expose the complex, yet systematic normativity the asylum seekers experienced.

Schlingensiefel's performances bore no sympathy for traditional activism and he expressed this clearly on the last day of the happening: "Widerstand ist vorbei, sie müssen Widersprüchlichkeit erzeugen" [„Resistance is over, you must produce contrariness"]. The "exilic voices and bodies" (Jestrović 165) of the asylum seekers may have been subordinated to the entrepreneurial concepts of the established Western director, but Schlingensiefel was fully aware of this. He openly declared during one of his reflections in Paul Poets documentary: "Das war jetzt kein Amnesty International Projekt...das war jetzt auch nicht ein "zeig-mir-deine-Wunden" Projekt...das war in sich ein hochschweinisches Unternehmen" [„This was no Amnesty International Project...this was also not a „show-me-your-wounds“ project...in a way it was quite a swinish endeavor"]. In other words, Schlingensiefel was fully aware that he was neither appealing to the public for help nor was he going to ensure that the asylum seekers that were a part of *Ausländer Raus!* received a cash prize and/or permanent residence in Austria (Jestrović 167). There is no room for resistance in this project because *Ausländer Raus!* relies on the objectification of asylum seekers by locking them in containers and covering the city center

in xenophobic slogans. Furthermore, one of the speakers at the end of the documentary points out (along with Schlingensief earlier on in during the happening) that it is curious that all the protests and debates occurred in front of the “pseudo detention center” while there was an actual refugee/detention facility just a few kilometers away immediately outside of Vienna. Not one person had ventured out to protest and/or demand the freedom for asylum seekers waiting there. The performance of the “refugee,” “asylum seeker,” and/or “illegal” appeals more and gathers more uproar than the actual, real-life experiences. As Jestrović argues, the performance of asylum may be more powerful than the reality of its subject. Debord notes in his *Society of the Spectacle* that the present age, “prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, representation to reality, the appearance to essence.” In the second half of the twentieth century and in the new millennium, this preference only further highlights the volatility and insufficiency of statist normativity.

2.4 CONCLUSION: IS CONTRARINESS ALL THAT WE GAIN FROM *AUSLÄNDER RAUS!* ?

The event and its documentary neither solve nor offer an alternative approach to the perception and treatment of those labeled as “asylum seekers,” “illegals,” and/or “refugees.” However, the 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* and the resulting 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container* are proof that the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century continued to operate on a standard, predetermined reference point of identity. In his happening, Schlingensief aurally, spatially, and visually represented officially implemented parameters and political opinions regarding those

who crossed the national border into Austria as “asylum seekers,” “illegals,” and/or “refugees.” *Ausländer Raus!* captured what happens as a result of discrepancies between migration controls in the country of destination and the needs of the migrant. By “overidentifying” with the power discourse, and thus producing what he termed as “Widersprüchlichkeit” [contrariness] and allowing it to play out without any type of protocol among the public, Schlingensiefel confirmed the asylum seeker’s reality at the turn of the new millennium.

Christoph Schlingensiefel’s 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* and the resulting 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefels Container* by Paul Poet synthesize a complex project at the turn of the millennium. While we may never be able to view the 100+ hours of footage (and ultimately it is questionable whether this would be productive) of the event that transpired over a period of seven days between June 11 and June 17, 2000, it is a rarity that an official filmic record exists of the happening at all. The lifecycle of the documentary, from its filming to the premiere at the Filmcasino in Vienna on June 13, 2001, experienced commercial and political challenges that made it difficult to produce the documentary.

The hostility of Jörg Haider and the FPÖ towards *Ausländer Raus!* parallels the frequent disdain and frustration for Schlingensiefel’s projects in both popular and scholarly opinions. This is because Schlingensiefel employed various stylistic approaches at once in order to comment upon highly controversial sociopolitical issues. Schlingensiefel took his art very personally as he had both a “disdain for boundaries” and was someone who “could not get along with lies” (Biesenback 110). This disposition prompted Schlingensiefel to begin forming what would become his hallmark approach first with work in film in the 1980s and 1990s, such as *Tunguska – Die Kisten sind da!* [*Tunguska – The Crates are Delivered!*] (1984), *Menu Total* (1985), and

the “Deutschlandtrilogie” which includes three feature films: *100 Jahre Adolf Hitler – Die letzte Stunde im Führerbunker* (1989) [*100 years of Adolf Hitler – the Last Hour in the Führer Bunker*], *Das deutsche Kettensägenmassaker* (1990) [*The German Chainsaw Massacre*], and *Terror 2000 – Intensivstation Deutschland/Deutschland außer Kontrolle* (1992) [*Terror 2000 – Intensive Care Unit Germany/Germany out of Control*]. While *Tunguska* focuses on the political elements and aftermath of Germany’s involvement in the Second World War, *Menu Total* engages with physical and psychological imprisonment. Schlingensief further developed these concepts in the *Deutschlandtrilogie*, which demonstrates his growing interest in contemporary economic and sociopolitical issues in a Germany that was struggling to unify its inhabitants both theoretically and practically. Schlingensief covered Adolf Hitler’s final moments, portrayed German unification as a barbaric process, and focused on xenophobia in Germany in the early 1990s in the *Deutschlandtrilogie* in a particular way. The lack of a traditional narrative, the immediacy and frequency of images, the collapsing of temporality, and the aesthetics of excess all coalesced to depict a particular time in Germany and in Europe. In addition to the ensuing political changes in Germany, an increase in international conflicts prompted waves of cross-border migration that in turn furthered a fixed hierarchy of belonging.

Among Schlingensief’s public actions and interventions in the 1990s and 2000s, he produced *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* in the form of postdramatic theater, namely what Hans-Thies Lehmann termed as the “art of the event.” As Paul Poet indicated, the 2000 happening lived primarily in the images, to a point where they were more important than the logic of (any available) plot. The opening sequence in *Ausländer Raus* demonstrates characteristics of statist normativity such as the reactive, one-sided identification of those deemed as “asylum seekers,” “refugees,” and “illegals” and the

implementation of fixed hierarchy of official belonging for individuals in the form of official anti-foreigner declarations such as quotes, summaries, and billboard advertisements for the FPÖ. The subsequent film chapter shows the collapse of legal and personal identities of the asylum seekers who are arriving on the scene of the event, ultimately dismissing the human aspect entirely with specific terms such as “transport into the container.” The distortion of the asylum seekers’ identities through colorful wigs and newspaper covering their faces was initially explained as a “security precaution” in the documentary, but it signaled the reality for these individuals, namely that they ultimately hold no decision-making power when it comes to their status in the receiving country. Even the subjective and thus unpredictable process of proving a well-founded fear of persecution is unavailable to the asylum seekers in *Ausländer Raus!* as they are continually shuffled around between the Austrian public’s voting preferences and Schlingensief’s “security” staff. The discrepancies between the needs of those labeled as “asylum seekers,” “illegals,” and/or “refugees” and the controls of the country (in this case, Austria) in which these individuals temporarily live surfaced the day “The anti-fascist front” stormed the containers and took down the “Ausländer Raus!” sign. In addition to putting the asylum seekers physically at risk as the container roof threatened to collapse under their weight, the group failed to realize that they simply took over the negotiation of the asylum seekers’ existence over from the voting public, from Schlingensief, and from the FPÖ for a moment in time – a deceptive switch that did not change the reality of the container’s inhabitants at all.

3.0 “DON’T PANIK – I’M MUSLIM.” – CHALLENGING STATIST NORMALITY THROUGH DIS-IDENTIFICATION IN *NEUKÖLLN UNLIMITED*

“Du darfst kein Cappuccino, das gehört der Mama.” [“You are not allowed to have any cappuccino, that belongs to mom.”] One of the youngest children in the Akkouch family hopes to tell on his older brother Maradona as the latter tries to get a taste of their mom’s coffee on a Saturday morning. Lial, nineteen years of age at the time and the oldest of the children, is sitting on a nearby couch in pajamas. Her legs are crossed, and she has a high stack of papers and envelopes nestled on her lap. She opens one by one, and after a short while hands a piece of paper to her eighteen-year-old brother Hassan: “Da ist ein Brief von der Härtefall Kommission. Ich weiss nicht ob es wichtig ist...nimm mal” [“Here is a letter from the Hardship-Case Commission. I don’t know if it’s important...take it.”] (*Neukölln Unlimited*). Hassan begins to read the letter: “Ah, okay....sie stimmen mit unserem Fall überein, also sie wollen, dass wir hierbleiben...sozusagen. Aber der Innensenator stimmt dagegen, und deswegen verfällt das.” [Ah, okay...they agree with our case, meaning, they want us to stay here, so to say. But the Senator of the Interior vot[ed] against it, and because of that it’s going to fall through.”] The tattletale sibling exclaims: “Dun-dun-duuuuuhh!” After a brief shot of the mother – whose eyes are fixed on Hassan – the camera turns to Maradona, who continues to share the rest of the letter slowly and with great hesitation, reminiscent of a person who is still learning how to read: “Ich habe alle von euch eingereichten Unterlagen an den Innensenator weitergegeben, und ihn auch

noch einmal gebeten, eine Entscheidung bezüglich eurer Mutter und eurer Geschwister noch einmal zu überdenken. Leider ist er meiner Anregung nicht gefolgt, was ich sehr...bedauere.” [I have forwarded all of the documents that you have turned in to the Senator of the Interior, and I have asked him to reconsider once more the decision in regard to your mother and your siblings. Unfortunately, he did not take me up on my proposal, which I very much regret.”] What follows is a heated conversation between Hassan and Lial during which they argue about what they should do if part of the family must return to Lebanon. Do they go with them? Or do they stay and try to petition the authorities to accept the rest of the family back into Germany?

The above exchange is a small part of the 2010 documentary *Neukölln Unlimited*, Agostino Imondi and Dietmar Ratsch’s first collaboration. Imondi, who had previously directed *Waking up the Nation* (2006) and worked on films such as *One Who Set Forth: Wim Wenders Early Years* (2007) and *Zwischen Heimat und Vaterland – Russlanddeutsche Häuslebauer* (2007) stumbled upon the Akkouch family completely by accident. In an interview with both Imondi and Ratsch, whose resume credits include director and cinematographer for *Eislimonade für Hong Li* (2000), *Landliebe* (2003), and *Afghanen flirten nicht* (2004), they reveal that at first, *Neukölln Unlimited* was not even part of the plan. Imondi admits: “Ich war in Neukölln, um für einen anderen Film zu recherchieren. Dabei sollte es eigentlich um Jugendkriminalität gehen” (TIP Berlin). He continues: “Ich habe dann zufällig Maradona kennengelernt... später auch Hassan, seinen Bruder... Als ich ihre Geschichte gehört hatte, wusste ich, dass ich gern einen Film darüber machen wollte.” [„At that point, I met Maradona by accident...later his brother Hassan as well...When I heard their story, I knew that I wanted to make a film about it.”] Three years later, the resulting 90-minute documentary depicts the lives of members of the Akkouch family who immigrated to Germany from Lebanon in 1994. Apart from a six-month long

deportation to Lebanon by the German authorities in 2003, the Akkouchs had been living in the Neukölln area of Berlin up until and including the time of filming.

Throughout the documentary *Neukölln Unlimited*, Ratsch and Imondi focus a substantial amount of time portraying the three oldest siblings and their respective daily lives in detail. The viewer partakes in private moments such as Hassan waking up in the morning, Hassan and Maradona brushing their teeth in the bathroom, Lial talking on her cellphone and putting dishes away in the kitchen, and the family discussing the sixteen-year unresolved fate of their residency in Germany as part of a Saturday morning breakfast. Using a handheld camera in close quarters of the small apartment, the images are often very proximate and exude intimacy, even familiarity. The Akkouchs seem to forget the camera, as if it were just another family member floating about in the already crowded setting. Thus, Imondi and Ratsch also record several disagreements and screaming matches among the siblings. The arguments not only underline their complex lives (if they happen to be about their visas or about paying utilities for the month), but they also show them as teenagers whose official residence status is only one part of an otherwise multifaceted existence (such as the balancing of education, work, hobbies, travel, friends, and romantic interests).

The directors also emphasize the passions Hassan, Lial, and Maradona pursue, such as competitive breakdancing, rapping and singing, vocational training, and even successfully competing during a season of “Supertalent” (Germany’s version of “America’s Got Talent”). Ratsch and Imondi highlight that although the siblings thoroughly enjoy their hobbies and multiple jobs, these creative activities hold a much higher significance for them. Hassan and Lial have completely taken over the family’s finances and have put their entrepreneurial energy into making enough money so that they can legally prove self-sufficiency and thus enable the

entire family to stay permanently in Germany. This is further complicated by the fact that each family member holds a different visa (*Duldung* for the most part) and must renew it at least every four to six months.

This chapter analyzes how the documentary *Neukölln Unlimited* challenges statist normativity through “dis-identification” on part of the social actors. In the case of *Neukölln Unlimited*, the Akkouch family establishes a complex existence that allows its members to negotiate the official social and political assignments of the state. Through dis-identification we witness the family as neither an abject victim of the state apparatus nor as fully content individuals living in Berlin who enjoy the rights and privileges of someone with a permanent residency permit. Ratsch and Imondi reached beyond the simplifying juxtaposition of “us” versus “them” and “native” or “citizen” vs. “other” or “foreigner” to show a multifaceted existence that ranges from private daily routines to familial milestones as well as public success and recognition. By utilizing fly-on-the-wall and expository/essayistic documentary approaches, Imondi and Ratsch captured scenes in which the siblings’ personal and professional the accomplishments are juxtaposed with the family’s official residence and status challenges in Germany.

The overarching characteristic, or perceptible pattern, of dis-identification is the director’s and the cinematographer’s awareness of the contrasting conditions they present to the viewer: the officially assigned and state document based identity versus the real complex existence that dissociates from this identity. In *Neukölln Unlimited*, the contrasting conditions materialize in scenes that show the juxtaposition of officially assigned parameters by the state apparatus and the autonomous negotiation on part of those who have been assigned this official status. A successful instance of dis-identification is therefore a direct challenge of the social

actor's official credentials, and ultimately, the person's overarching status. In the case of *Neukölln Unlimited*, dis-identification consists of habitual events such as going to school, working, traveling, and spending time with family and friends. Activities such as obtaining good grades, having a job or multiple jobs that bring in a certain amount of money, and planning for a life beyond K-12 education carry greater weight because these exact activities – and more importantly, their outcome – play a significant role in determining the subsequent phase of the social actors' lives. Dis-identification thus captures the complex negotiation between the officially assigned parameters by the state and the autonomous negotiation of survival in both the tangible and social sense on part of the assignee. The result is a separation of personal and official identities (as they are one in statist normativity). The personal everyday identity in *Neukölln Unlimited* - and as such, in the actual lives of the Akkouch family - is a specific, productive self that functions successfully on a daily basis. It overshadows the inexact, limiting language of what a "refugee," an "asylum seeker," and/or an "illegal" is officially.

Similarly to Christoph Schlingensief's 2001 happening *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*, Ratsch and Imondi do not present a solution or a one-sided approach to telling this story. However, Imondi and Ratsch clearly deviate from Schlingensief's project in two ways. First, *Neukölln Unlimited* was a planned documentary, which consequently developed over what we may term as a traditional filming and distribution process. Second, *Neukölln Unlimited* focuses on the living practices as enacted and described through the social actors' own voices. There are no theoretical interludes or interviews with the directors or scholars who comment upon the project and/or the residential statuses. The directors also refrain from forcing a story line apart from depicting an edited selection of events in the lives of the Akkouchs. The beginning of *Neukölln Unlimited*, for example, does not force an immediate and clear

presentation of the individuals and the subjects that will be addressed. Instead, the viewer witnesses part of the Akkouch family's daily routine, complete with overlapping arguments and languages. Additionally, the conclusiveness of the scenes is often left up to the viewer. In other words, Dietmar and Ratsch present a compilation of moments that place both sides of the juxtaposition in a positive as well as in a challenging light. On one hand, the official entities do not alter their course of action to accommodate the Akkouch family. On the other, the siblings are not passively accepting the limits put upon them by the type of residential permit they hold – paradoxically enough, they attempt to circumvent the restrictions to fulfill their implicit requirements.

3.1 PERCEIVED VALUE

Seven years after its official release in 2010, *Neukölln Unlimited* is sparingly mentioned in mainstream media and print sources as well as in academic works. Apart from a brief plot synopsis on IMDB, Yahoo Movies, and Rotten Tomatoes, the film has made its way into several film festivals and on occasion, has been used for educational purposes. In addition to events such as the 2010 Chicago International Children's Film Festival, the 2010 Discovery Film Festival in the UK, and the 2011 Carnegie International Film Festival, *Neukölln Unlimited* has been part of "Deutsche Woche" at the University of Vaasa in Finland in March 2014 and was featured in "German Film Night" at Calvin College in Michigan in November 2014. While featured at DOK Leipzig in October 2010, *Neukölln Unlimited* was included in the film festival's "Exklusive Schulvorstellung." As part of the screening, the students received a detailed 17-page PDF document outlining the film's background and development, as well as a meticulously drawn up

discussion schema in regard to issues the film raises. In a similar fashion, the 2010 Discovery Film Festival in the UK collaborated with the local Goethe Institute in order to compose a similar text. The contents of its title page include a pre-viewing lesson, viewing- and post-viewing activities, as well as worksheets on each sibling and a “Middle East crisis online resource guide” at the end. To conclude, the institute shares that it is “[u]sing the *Neukölln Unlimited* documentary to introduce Social Studies experiences and key citizenship themes and concepts to Modern Studies pupils.”

In addition to film festivals and educational ventures, a small number of mainstream newspapers wrote about the Imondi/Ratsch collaboration. Articles such as “Lust auf neue, unbegangene Wege” by Cristina Nord as well as “Toleranz und Spiele” by Johannes Kopp (both appeared in 2010 in *Die Tageszeitung*, the most left of the mainstream press) praise *Neukölln Unlimited* for its unapologetic and direct treatment of the issues that the Akkouch family encounters. Nord goes a step further by resurfacing what she perceives to be the essential purpose of the documentary: “[Der Film] ist wie eine Gegenrede zu Thilo Sarrazin: Wie sollen Leute wie die Akkouchs sich in den deutschen Alltag integrieren, wenn ihnen eine Tür nach der anderen vor der Nase zugeschlagen wird? Und wieso...sind die Behörden und die Politiker so blöd, ihre gewaltigen Anstrengungen nicht wahrzunehmen” (Nord, “Toleranz”).

There is a specific trend here when it comes to how *Neukölln Unlimited* has been perceived and used. In the case of film festivals and other types of public movie screenings, the documentary is treated as a universal case-study for both secondary and college education. The lives of the Akkouch family stand in for global debates such as the “Middle East Crisis” and modern debates such as citizenship and in some cases, migration. When we look to mainstream newspapers such as the articles by Cristina Nord and Johannes Kopp, the debate centers around a

drastic separation of “Germans” from “others” such as the Akkouch family in this case. Expressions such as “deutscher Alltag” and “integrieren” suggest that there is such a thing as a “German day” – that everyday life within the national borders of Germany is radically different from a daily routine somewhere else. The danger with both approaches and with discussing a work such as *Neukölln Unlimited* within these confines is threefold. First, methods such as these pigeonhole all the participants: while Germany is described as a problematic and domineering nation-state, immigrants such as the members of the Akkouch family are the subjugated non-members of German society. This equation of opposites consequently stagnates the discourse on migrants because it does not allow it to move away from the dichotomy of those represented as being powerless versus those who are perceived as being in power. Finally, this kind of perpetuated opposition generalizes and disrupts the potential of a documentary such as *Neukölln Unlimited*.

Apart from this type of brief journalistic discussion of *Neukölln Unlimited*, Fatima El-Tayeb, Professor of African-American Literature and Cultural Studies at the University of California in San Diego, in *Difference Incorporated: European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* examines the ways in which ethnic and racialized minorities, citizens and migrants, complicate the very notion of cohesive European identities through activism and creative practices. As a result, El-Tayeb argues, these individuals “circumvent the complicated question of national belonging by producing a localized, multi-centered, horizontal community, in which a strong identification with cities or neighborhoods, perceived as spaces both created by and transcending national and ethnic limits, combines with a larger diasporic perspective” (El-Tayeb xxxvii). The chapter titled ““Stranger in My Own Country:” European Identities, Migration, and Diasporic Soundscapes” quotes Hassan Akkouch and his experiences of

belonging outside of the German national construct. By discussing the geographical as well as economic limits and oftentimes the damaging effects of *Duldung*, El-Tayeb argues that young individuals like Hassan build their own “translocal” community, one based not on race or ethnic origin but on the “common effects of racialized economic exclusion” across Europe (El-Tayeb 29). El-Tayeb’s approach is valuable in that it begins to recognize a subtler discourse apart from one that strictly divides “victims of the state apparatus” from the influence of the social and political constructions officially assigned by the state. El-Tayeb’s focus is on a collective view of ethnic and racialized minorities, citizens, and migrants – *Difference Incorporated* gives us this discourse via a cultural studies/social science/political sciences perspective. It is here where I would like to pick up and focus on the representational, that is, on the filmic possibilities of showing the limits of such an approach to the identification of people and the specific methods film can employ to uncover new perspectives for both viewers and scholars.

3.2 THE “D” WORD

The following discussion outlines the technological and theoretical development of the documentary film form. A highly complex and challenging endeavor, the definition of documentary film has remained unchanged since its first expression almost a hundred years ago, while the medium, which it signifies, has progressed through several technological advancements. The cinematic, or moving, image is thus quite porous in that it is capable of absorbing both the mechanical improvements as well as the stylistic changes that either precipitated or resulted out of them in the first place. With the availability of different media in the twenty-first century, the process of documenting perceptible reality in front of the camera

now challenges the filmmaker to adapt accordingly. Both the director and cinematographer now can orchestrate a multi-layered approach to capture various perceptions of a reality that cannot be perceived wholly and essentially. While this may seem a defeatist conclusion for hermeneutic or epistemological aspirations, it is a necessary recognition that precedes the historicizing of documentary film form. In other words, the very act of realizing that even with the aesthetic capabilities we have developed over the centuries we cannot capture an epistemological plenitude is necessary to move forward and open the conversation on what the different media and accompanying methodologies have managed to discover. The documentary film form in the twenty-first century therefore draws together two potent elements. One, it carries within itself the latest technological and stylistic advancements that the medium of film offers, and two, its purpose is to reveal something new about perceptible reality while having these advancements at its disposal. In the case of *Neukölln Unlimited*, the result is an innovative dis-identification of some of the most fundamental standardized characteristics attributed to those who are perceived as migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers.

The documentary is as elusive an undertaking as it is a productive one, precisely because it vacillates between the attempt to document an ontological wholeness and a critical awareness of the impossibility of achieving epistemological completion. The term documentary film itself requires a variety of scholarly effort to identify it clearly – and even then, the documentary resists conclusive definition. The available descriptions contain uncertainty and phrasing that immediately attracts contestation. One possible expectation an audience may have of a documentary is that it will impart something new about our perceptible reality. However, as soon as the words “reality” and “truth” appear, entire discourses come up in arms ready to argue

against such a possibility. And yet, that word, “reality,” has stood both the test of time and academic critique ever since John Grierson officially used it for the first time in 1922.

Technological transformations influence the medium of film. Consequently, the type of “reality” one encounters in a filmic scene is highly dependent upon both the type and variety of editing techniques and media other than film are utilized. In the twenty-first century, the filmic screenshot has the capability of simultaneously scooping up a number of technical approaches such as the moving image, sound, text, animation, and digitally enhanced imaging, to name a few.

Betsy A. McLane, author of the 2012 work *A New History of the Documentary Film* states that the documentary “began with the birth of film itself” in the late nineteenth century (McLane 11). McLane also addresses the origins of the documentary film form by examining the etymology of the term. “Documentary,” she argues, has as its root-word “document,” which comes from the Latin “docere,” meaning “to teach” (McLane 6). McLane even cites the Oxford English Dictionary entry from the year 1800 in which “documentary” is defined as “a lesson; an admonition, a warning.” Five years before the publication of McLane’s book, Patricia Aufderheide, Professor of Communications at the American University in Washington, DC, composed her work *Documentary film: a very short introduction*. In this book, Aufderheide offers a comparable definition by arguing that “documentary...emerged awkwardly out of early practice.” As entrepreneurs began to record moving pictures of “real-life events,” they often referred to these works as “educationals,” “actualities,” and “interest films” (Aufderheide 3-4).

Although the following work is more than forty years old, it contains a judiciously selected number of essays chronicling the development of the documentary film form. Arranged by the film historian, filmmaker, and critic Lewis Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition – from*

Nanook to Woodstock engages specifically with the beginnings of the documentary. Jacobs argues that what we term as a “documentary” developed slowly over a period of almost thirty years from 1894 to 1922, when it finally emerged “as an original model distinct from all other types of motion pictures” (2). The way the documentary set itself apart is that it presented a “clear social purpose, dealing with real people and real events,” as opposed to “staged scenes of imaginary characters and fictional stories of the studio-made pictures” (4-5). The earliest hint of the character of documentary was evident in the very first motion pictures projected on a screen: W.K.L. Dickson’s *Record of a Sneeze* (1894) as well as Lumière Brothers’ *Workers Emerging from a Factory* (1894), for example. As Jacobs argues, even though these actualities lasted only about a minute, they revealed a new medium “that could perceive and represent reality with greater fidelity than any medium known theretofore” (4).

Drawing out several crucial elements that identified the early documentary film form we can note that first, the documentary began at a time when the very medium of film appeared, which presented its own set of challenges. As Hugo Münsterberg explicates in his 1916 work *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*, one of the difficulties with any new medium is validating its relevance among already existing aesthetic approaches. Staking out a space for the documentary, therefore, was as instantaneous as ratifying the importance of film itself. Second, as Aufderheide, Jacobs, and McLane point out, the expectation of a documentary is that it simultaneously shows the audience the most veritable version of reality as well as that it teaches the viewer something new about the reality s/he is witnessing on the screen. The beginning of the documentary, therefore, is not just synonymous with the beginning of a new medium – the documentary film form also carries the arduous task of showing us something new about the “reality” contained within the cinematic frame.

Editing “endowed the movies with great new capabilities for controlling and manipulating the flow of time, the speed of events, and screen continuity or order” (Jacobs 3). The fact that films were now suddenly opened up to the rearrangement and reconstruction of reality for narrative and dramatic purposes paralleled a “growing interest in probing the social environment.” At the same time, as Jacobs points out, “[the period of] 1910-1920” was “a time of feverish activity in motion pictures” in general. Changes in production and exhibition emerged as film became a mass medium. Consequently, the public witnessed the “emergence of an aggressive entrepreneurship with interlocking organizations all aiming at a mass audience and international markets” (4). During this time, nonfiction film gained its own measure of importance. Along with feature story-films, the newsreel appeared as a continuous motion-picture news service in theaters.

Now it is important to add that along with the expectation of depicting reality, the documentary adapted according to the technological advancements from which the medium of film benefited. The discovery of a new method or technique thus put both filmmaker and viewer in a position to (re)negotiate the purpose of the medium of film. One example of this negotiation occurred in 1921 with the film *Manhatta*. Conceptualized and executed by two master photographers of the twentieth century, Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, *Manhatta* is a ten-minute abstract filmic portrait of New York City. Jacobs describes it as “a kind of camera poem” (6), complete with angle shots, foreshortened viewpoints, and patterns of mass and line. In contrast to the reportage approach, *Manhatta* makes no direct reference to actual people, places, or events. As Jacobs argues, Sheeler and Strand’s aim was “not to mirror nature,” but instead to “break down reality and reorganize it into a rhythmic composition” (6). Beginning with a ferry approaching the isle of Manhattan, *Manhatta*’s 65 shots are arranged so as to focus on the formal

values of that which is being depicted within each frame. Factual material such as throngs of people moving in unison, massive concrete buildings, and the occasional bird's eye view that is almost entirely obscured by smoke are sequenced – that is, edited – with the aim of expressing the feel of a city.

The documentary film form, whose expectation was to depict the “truest” form of perceptible reality, thus began to do so by the conscious and deliberate use of editing. *Manhatta*'s influence may be seen in the years following its release in Paris in 1923 (Jacobs 8) with documentaries such as Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin-Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927), George Lacombe's *La Zone* (1927), Joris Ivens' *The Bridge* (1927) and *Rain* (1929), Rene Clair's study of the Eiffel Tower in *La Tour* (1928) as well as Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). As both McLane and Aufderheide emphasize, the “traditional start of the English-language documentary” was with Robert Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Moana* (1926). After viewing *Moana*, Scottish filmmaker and critic John Grierson used the term “documentary” for the first time in his review in *The New York Sun* on February 8, 1926: “Of course, *Moana* being a visual account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian youth and his family, has documentary value” (Rotha 17, 50). Shortly thereafter, “documentary” developed as a stand-alone noun and by 1930, “the documentary film had become an acknowledged category,” achieving “a secure, if yet small, niche in the world of film” (Jacobs 14).

As the documentary film form slowly took shape, the simplicity with which it was initially defined soon mandated a closer look. In fact, the ease with which scholars in the early 1920s and today define the documentary as “a movie that tries to teach you something...about real life, with claims to truthfulness” (Aufderheide 2) reveals the documentary's profound complexity. For example, John Grierson himself was personally dissatisfied with both his

mention of the word “documentary” in the review of *Moana* and the fervor with which the signifier was implemented to reflect a new type of filmmaking. Nevertheless, between 1932 and 1934 Grierson wrote one of his first theoretical essays titled “First Principles of Documentary” in which he underscores that “documentary” is “a clumsy description” but we should nevertheless “let it stand” (Grierson 19). In the same work, Grierson describes the documentary as being a “creative” or an “artistic representation of actuality,” a definition that has for the most part stood the test of time in scholarly writings. Furthermore, the British documentary filmmaker, film historian and critic Paul Rotha wrote in his 1973 work *Documentary Diary* that “documentary’s essence lies in the dramatization of actual material” (Rotha xvi).

Both Grierson and Rotha’s redefinition of the documentary reveals that trusting the documentary film form, and any medium for that matter, with the “truthful depiction of reality” carries with it a process of self-negation. While “truthful depiction of reality” may be the theoretical goal, it is by no means the result. This is a significant part of the reason why the “d-word” is such a touchy subject – it is not that it is a “clumsy description,” as Grierson noted, or, as Aufderheide stated, that it emerged “awkwardly out of early practice.” Instead, it may be more productive to think of the documentary film form as a complex endeavor highly influenced by the same factors that drive film overall – such as technological capabilities, filmmakers’ goals, and the topic at hand, to name a few. In other words, the documentary’s challenge lies in the negotiation of the capabilities of the medium and by using those capabilities to show the reality of the subject(s) being depicted as best as possible. The documentary is entrusted with depicting perceptible reality while allowing it to remain open to modifications according to what the medium of film has to offer.

Aufderheide acknowledges this aspect in her work when she stresses that an audience does not necessarily expect that the story on the big screen be portrayed objectively. Instead, “we...expect that a documentary will be a fair and honest representation of somebody’s *experience* of reality (3, my emphasis).” Finally, Aufderheide establishes that a documentary is “a pledge...made to the viewer” – it is an assurance that what the viewer “will see and hear is about something real and true” (56). In order to achieve the closest possible depiction of reality, however, the documentary filmmaker “must...use a wide range of artifice in order to assert that claim” (57) and employ “a large range of formal choices in registering for viewers the veracity and importance of what they [the filmmakers] show them [the viewers]” (10, 127). The documentary filmmaker may employ poetic license to remain committed to reality – that is, both filmmaking and editing must support the social actor’s experience of reality.

One of documentary’s primary goals is that the subjective reality of the individual(s) and subject matter(s) depicted on the big screen be the closest and most successful attempt at a representation of that ultimately unrepresentable reality. Elizabeth Cowie, Professor of Film Studies at the University of Kent in the UK, addresses the paradoxes of documentary through her theoretically informed analyses of the history of this film form in the 2011 work *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real*. According to Cowie, documentary “enables reality to “speak” at the same time it “speaks about” reality” (Cowie 31). Nevertheless, it is in its intent, and consequently, its continuing reinvention, that the documentary is one of the most successful attempts at capturing and showing reality. As Cowie states, “...the force driving the most dedicated documentarians has always been, and remains, a deep desire to shed light on the very issues, people, places and processes that make the world so complex” (363). Cowie continues:

‘[i]n terms of promoting social change, documentary film remains one of the most effective ways to enhance understanding on a mass level’ (364).

The theoretical and technological advancements discussed above demonstrate how the birth of the medium of film corresponded to the fundamental concerns of a documentary. In the beginning, recording what is perceived as reality and re-playing the creative treatment of it drove cinema’s growth. As Cowie and Aufderheide emphasize, once filmmakers began experimenting with lighter 16mm equipment after World War II, the resulting conventions compelled viewers to believe in the film’s “truthfulness.” Formal aspects such as long takes or scenes “made viewers feel that they were watching unvarnished reality” and “the jerkiness of handheld cameras was testimony to the “you-are-there immediacy” (Aufderheide 12). The implied urgency as indicated by “ambush” interviews and catching subjects off guard led the audience to believe that the subject must be hiding a truth worth discovering – and representing. As access to equipment for production, distribution and exhibition became more universal, “the documentary world expanded and reconfigured in surprising ways (Cowie 363-4). Nowadays, as Cowie points out, high definition cameras and screens, hundreds of cable and satellite channels, internet exhibition, and video-on-demand “are all realities.” While production studios spend increasingly more for special effects, “documentaries of all kinds are made at much lower cost” (366). As Cowie concludes, in the twenty-first century this film form “is livelier and more complex than ever,” offering “animated documentaries, computer-generated documentaries...video diaries, direct documentaries, investigative news documentaries, and all of their hybrids” (387).

As we may see from the analyses provided by Patricia Aufderheide, Elizabeth Cowie, John Grierson, Lewis Jacobs, Betsy McLane, and Paul Rotha, a documentary is a filmic process that strives to record and represent reality – and not necessarily in that order. A documentary’s

primary goal is to transmit the closest version of the experiences in which the social actor(s) participate in front of the camera. Although films, including documentaries, represent their filmic worlds through a particular frame, the level of representation in a documentary carries with it the awareness that one cannot capture an epistemological plenitude. The documentary also holds the unique position of having emerged with the advent of film itself. The first films in the late nineteenth century were records of everyday moments. As editing became a technological possibility in the early twentieth century, it greatly influenced the making of films, including the documentary. Documentaries, records of everyday occurrences, opened up to the rearrangement and reconstruction of reality for specific narrative and dramatic purposes. This, in turn, paralleled a growing interest in examining the social environment. Depicting the truest form of perceptible reality coincided with the conscious and deliberate use of editing. The documentary then became a creative representation of perceptible reality, in which the “creative” aspect ideally ensured a fair representation of a specific experience.

3.2.1 Enough for a genre

In the second half of the twentieth century, there has been significant growth in the study and critical analysis of documentary film. Until the 1990s this may be seen as a “steady development of recognition...of the social and cultural importance of the documentary project” (Austin and de Jong 13). From the mid-1990s this development accelerated, motivated by further technological advancements, reality television, and the success of feature documentaries in cinemas, in particularly in the United States. If we think back to chapter 1, we may recall that the second half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century witnessed many legal and sociopolitical changes that directly contributed to statist normativity. An increase in frequency

of international political conflicts spurred repeated acts of migration across national borders, which in turn educed multi-tiered attempts at regulating this type of movement. The legal approaches (such as the conventions regarding the status of refugees, the institution of MRPs and different types of visas, for example) established a relationship between knowledge and security, ultimately collapsing personal and legal identities to provide and object for governing. Film, and with it, the documentary, employed poetic license to depict a social actor's experience of reality and at the same time, it experienced greater theoretical engagement during the same time period. As statist normativity took away identity and specificity of experience in the legal and sociopolitical sectors, the documentary supplied aspects of both on camera. In the following discussion, I will outline a select number of approaches in both defining and classifying documentary film. I will then focus on characteristics of the "fly-on-the-wall" and "essayistic/expository" documentary approaches to show how *Neukölln Unlimited* pushes against statist normativity.

The early 20th century blueprint definition of what constitutes a documentary has barely changed. For example, in his 1991 book *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Film critic and theoretician Bill Nichols applied modern film theory to the study of documentary film. In this work, which remains the standard for discussions of the documentary film, Nichols defines documentaries as being "about real people who do not play or perform roles. Instead, they "play" or present themselves" (13). Nichols also recognizes the paradoxical undertaking of a documentary by expressing that these films "...offer introductory lacks, challenges, or dilemmas ... [and] do all this with reference to a "reality" that is a construct, the product of signifying systems, like the documentary film itself" (107).

Nichols' second-edition 2010 work *Introduction to Documentary* returns to once again examine the earliest definitions of documentary. Here Nichols argues that: “[t]o the extent a documentary tells a story, the story is a plausible representation of what happened rather than an imaginative interpretation of what might have happened” (10). Nichols further elaborates by stating that fictional narratives are fundamentally allegories. Moreover, they construct a world to stand in for another, “historical” realm where the “images in documentary films stem from the historical world directly” (7). They capture individuals and events that “we [all] share” instead of depicting characters and actions invented to tell a narrative. Finally, Nichols underlines the notion that documentaries “respect known facts and provide verifiable evidence” (7). In short, Nichols primarily emphasizes that documentaries speak about certain “real” events involving “real” people (social actors) who reveal themselves in such a way that conveys “a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations, and events portrayed” (14). Most importantly, according to Nichols, “the distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes this story into a way of seeing the historical world directly rather than [shaping it] into a fictional category” (14).

While the core definition of the documentary film form did not go through any significant changes since John Grierson formally used it in 1922, the debates involving both its approach and purpose have acquired greater depth. This is significant. First, it proves that the desire to capture perceptible reality is prevalent and necessary. Second, it indicates that although such an undertaking comes with its own complex challenges, the moving image is greatly capable of recording (and representing) the reality surrounding us. Filmmakers and academics alike realized that the documentary also offers a new perspective on previously existing – or rather, on already perceived – topics and issues. As mentioned earlier, documentary films remain one of

the most effective ways to enhance understanding of a distinct experience, but on a mass level and for a mass audience (instead of the other way around, that is, applying a mass characteristic to an individual, distinct experience, such as crossing a border under calamitous circumstances).

In his 2012 work *Journey through Documentary Film*, Luke Dormehl distinguishes between three main documentary styles: essayistic, poetic-experimental, and fly-on-the-wall. In his 2010 *Introduction to Documentary*, Nichols offers a similar take by listing the following categories: expository, poetic, and participatory. While there are other derivative categories of documentary films, these three types are the foremost, two of which lend themselves to a productive engagement with dis-identification.

Nichols' characterization of the expository styles overlaps with how Dormehl describes the qualities of the essayistic approach. Both expository and essayistic documentaries are most often exegetical in nature. They contain rhetorical discourse that is designed to provide specific information about a particular subject or historical event and as a result, essayistic documentaries are perceived as being carefully constructed and narrated "in order to present a clear, flowing argument designed to convince the viewer" (Dormehl 35). Most importantly, essayistic documentaries are often supported by the usage of an "authoritative "voice of god" narrator" (Nichols 150) that accompanies meticulously edited images of interviews, stills, archival materials, or even dramatized re-enactments (Dormehl 36).

In addition to Robert Flaherty's 1922 film *Nanook of the North*, the 1936 film *Night Mail* (as narrated by John Grierson), and the 1968 film *Powers of Ten* are examples of the expository/essayistic approaches. While *Nanook* focuses on an Inuit named Nanook and his family, *Night Mail* offers us a 25-minute synopsis documenting the journey of an overnight mail train traveling from London to Glasgow, on which the mail is sorted, dropped, and collected on

the run (Dormehl 39). *Powers of Ten* is a 9-minute documentary depicting the relative scale of the universe, from galactic to microscopic, in factors of ten (45-6). A later production, the film *Imagine: John Lennon*, already began to push the boundaries of the essayistic documentary. As Dormehl underscores, *Imagine* is not a chronological account of Lennon's life, but rather an attempt to portray him during his two musical phases both as a member of The Beatles and as a solo artist. More importantly, the "voice of god" narration is done by Lennon himself, but was created from over 100 hours of interviews. In order to help assemble the finished documentary, all of the available footage and recordings were transferred to laser disc and logged into a comprehensive database. Using a computer, the editor was thus able to quickly access any given piece of footage without having to shuffle through endless other material to reach it. This was an early version of non-linear editing (52-3).

Two early examples of the poetic-experimental documentary are Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Sinfonie der Großstadt* as well as Dziga Vertov's *The Man with the Movie Camera*. Documentary filmmakers who employ poetic-experimental devices arrange footage so as to evoke audience association through tone, rhythm, and spatial juxtaposition. A monotone musical composition may accompany the stark, minimalist form of an industrial space, which in turn may lead to an abandoned street, for example. Directed and edited by Humphrey Jennings and Stewart McAllister, the 1942 film *Listen to Britain* offers a 20-minute synopsis depicting different aspects of life in England at the time of the Second World War. A later production, Forugh Farrokhzad's 1963 poetic-experimental documentary *The House is Black (Khaneh siah ast)* depicts a leper colony outside Tabriz, the capital of Azerbaijan. Last but not least, the 1984 documentary *Antonio Gaudí* examines the work of the celebrated Catalan architect, ceramist, and sculptor. With direction and editing by Hiroshi Teshigahara and music by the celebrated Tôru

Takemitsu, Shinji Hori and Kurodo Mori, *Gaudi* is hailed as the “architectural symphony” version to Ruttman’s urban *Berlin: Sinfonie der Großstadt* (Dormehl 154).

Finally, while Dormehl engages with what he terms as fly-on-the-wall documentaries, Nichols focuses on films he identifies as participatory documentaries. In Dormehl’s case, the “fly-on-the-wall” aspect describes the apparent unobtrusiveness of the film crew’s presence in the making of the picture. Fly-on-the-wall documentaries are filmed on location and are therefore “made in the present tense,” recording events as opposed to examining those which have already occurred in the past, for example. Additionally, they may be characterized aesthetically by the usage of handheld cameras and synchronous (direct) sound recording. Participatory documentaries, on the other hand, allow the filmmaker to interact with her/his social actors, therefore directly participating in what occurs before the camera. In his discussion of the fly-on-the-wall documentary, Dormehl expresses that these are “arguably the purest form of documentary [,] supposedly presenting an unfettered view of events as they actually occurred” (159). While in the participatory style we may not just hear, but also see the filmmaker, in fly-on-the-wall documentaries the director remains hidden from the viewer and does not appear on screen. The films may contain interviews with subjects, but the motivation of the director is not directly addressed, although it may in some instances be inferred. Similarly, the film may contain voiceover for explanatory purposes only, although this will likely be sparse, and exist only to support the images, and not the other way around. Voiceover should also be neutral in content, even where the documentary in question may be presented so as to side on a particular issue with one party” (159).

In addition to a documentary such as Leni Riefenstahl’s grand propaganda piece *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*) from 1935, the fly-on-the-wall style may also be observed in a

film such as the 1944 *The Private Life of a Cat*. Directed by the husband-and-wife filmmaking team, Alexander Hammid and Maya Deren, this 22-minute short follows a male cat as he courts a female cat, who subsequently gives birth to a litter of five kittens. In an entirely different work directed and produced by Terry Zwigoff, Lynn O'Donnell, and David Lynch, the 1994 documentary *Crumb* offers a portrait of noted underground comic-book artist Robert Crumb and his family.

There is a tendency in determining varying documentary styles. The key factor in highlighting the differences between essayistic/expository, poetic/poetic-experimental, fly-on-the-wall, and participatory documentary methods lies in the approach to depicting the realities in front of the camera. The relationship, or lack thereof, between the filmmaker(s) and the subject(s) therefore needs careful consideration because even the slightest variation alters the depiction of the perceptible realities in front of the camera. And once again, we return to the earliest definition of the documentary, one that withstood various technological, theoretical, and practical advancements through almost a century. The documentary's primary goal still is the desire to reach and ultimately record as many aspects of perceptible reality as technologically and as stylistically possible. Documentaries of the twenty-first century are as porous as the medium of film itself, because they strive towards presenting as many facets of the reality in front of the camera as they can. The task of capturing multiple aspects of a social actor's experience requires both a variety of technological approaches, such as the simultaneous use of different media, as well as a variety of modes, that is, stylistic approaches on part of the filmmakers and cinematographers. This is not to say that "technology" and "style" are exclusive from one another. However, I make this distinction to emphasize the importance of both mechanical capabilities of the tools the filmmakers have at their disposal and their simultaneous

development of stylistic approaches. What Aufderheide terms as “poetic license,” Grierson describes as “creative use,” and Rotha names “dramatization of actual material,” is now equipped with a high number of both stylistic and technical capabilities. Filmmakers in the twenty-first century are therefore able to face the core expectation of the documentary film form with numerous theoretical and mechanized apparatuses. The resulting documentaries harbor a complex approach that results in varying degrees of [re]presenting perceptible reality. I will now draw out Dietmar Ratsch and Agostino Imondi’s filming approach in *Neukölln Unlimited* with the help of fly-on-the-wall and essayistic/expository documentary techniques to ultimately illustrate how dis-identification is realized.

3.2.2 Giving in to realities

The defining characteristic of dis-identification is the director’s and the cinematographer’s awareness of the contrasting conditions they present to the viewer. In *Neukölln Unlimited*, the contrasting conditions materialize in scenes that show the juxtaposition of officially assigned parameters by the state apparatus and the autonomous negotiation on part of those who have been assigned this official status. A successful instance of dis-identification is therefore a direct challenge of the social actor’s official credentials, and ultimately, the person’s overarching status.

To portray the contrasting conditions, Imondi and Ratsch develop an approach that focuses on the stories of the Akkouch family. In complete contrast to Christoph Schlingensief and Paul Poet’s *Ausländer Raus*, it is only the asylum seekers in *Neukölln Unlimited* who speak. Their faces are not hidden and their identities are not a secret. Furthermore, the directors built trust with the social actors over time so that their daily routines did not become a premeditated

performance for the viewer. In the case of a documentary such as *Neukölln Unlimited*, this mutual dependence is especially delicate because we are exposing a family whose official existence was completely unresolved at the time of filming. While this is most likely a significant part of the reason that prompted the work in the first place, it is an aspect that, if it is not handled properly by the filmmakers, will become an even greater problem and/or pose serious consequences for the social actors.

It is also important to note that although the filmmakers play a significant role in how they depict the Akkouch family, this process is not entirely up to them. The audience would not be able to witness a juxtaposition unless the individuals who are being filmed provided the contrast on their side. This also strengthens the notion that the documentary offers a plausible, “true” reality of the Akkouch family. What the audience continuously witnesses deviates from official legal parameters and definitions - if the official parameters were appropriate and effective, there would be very little room for divergence.

There are two overarching ways in which *Neukölln Unlimited* achieves dis-identification, namely through adapting expository/essayistic and fly-on-the-wall documentary approaches. Part of both expository and essayistic documentaries, the element of the “all-knowing voice of god” narrator belongs to the social actors who are being depicted on the screen. In *Neukölln Unlimited*, the voiceover the viewer hears are done only by either Hassan, Lial, or Maradona. While each sibling comments on her/his specific scene, in a couple of instances we also hear crossover-commentary. This is particularly important when the social actors share past experiences that have had a direct effect on their current official status. Such contextual scaffolding may appear in the form of a future plan and/or warranted speculation as to what may happen as a result of the negotiation of a standardized existence. Cinematically it may be

realized through imposed text on the screen and/or animation. For example, when it was time to tell the story of the family's deportation, the directors inserted an animated version of the narrative with Hassan's voiceover to show the viewer what had happened. The animated sequences explicate upon and therefore recognize what happened to the Akkouch family. However, because the directors chose to depict this aspect of the family members' lives in animation, two things happen: one, the animation clearly sets itself apart from the rest of the film in terms of the medium; two, while we may say that because it is an animation it is not included in the "real" film, it is also the only way it can be represented other than by a solely verbal narrative by the family members and/or reenactment. Using reenactment and/or a voiceover by someone other than a member of the family would further distance the family from controlling the way their own private experience has been told.

A characteristic of a fly-on-the-wall documentary is that both the filmmakers and the audience are privy to intimate spaces in which the social actors function. They are usually private architectural enclosures within which the social actors have time for themselves. These may include an apartment, a house, a makeshift house, a temporary abode, and even a dressing room, for example. This allows for a more nuanced presentation of personal stories and challenging occurrences that may otherwise not be shared publicly. In the case of *Neukölln Unlimited*, depicting the social actors' daily routine lies at the core of the entire film. Elements such as waking up, talking on the phone, going to school, working, making breakfast, and spending time with friends adopt a higher level of importance in the case of the Akkouch family because their actual existence is closely tied to their documented existence. It is important to remember that this is not the case with everyone. The behavior and the resulting daily decisions

of an asylum seeker, a refugee, or someone holding a temporary or restrictive visa are far more consequential than for someone holding a finite or a permanent status.

Any depiction of outside, public venues is limited, and is in concert with what the viewer already witnessed in the social actors' private spaces. In several instances, the viewer attains more information about the social actors' official status as assigned by a specific governing body. While this may include the depiction of actual paperwork, visas, passports, and postal correspondence, for example, it also encompasses the physical location from which these documents originate. Another possibility is that the audience may witness informal moments social actors spend with friends and/or travel, both of which further strengthen the (pro)active habitual nature of an individual who is otherwise recorded as having strict limits imposed on her/him. What we gain from these instances is a sense of how the social actors negotiate the limits of their officially assigned statuses by showing a working and/or a performative environment, as well as the social actors' engagement in the community in which they reside.

In the film, the contrasts achieved through expository/essayistic and fly-on-the wall documentary approaches contain two elements. One, the viewer witnesses a continuous event or a chronologically sequenced set of frames that lets us recognize that one main event is happening. One example is the scene during which the Akkouch siblings and their mother are sitting in the living room with a stack of mail that includes pertinent information about their ongoing residency case in Germany. Two, each event contains at least one behavioral example of how Hassan, Lial, and/or Maradona are succeeding in autonomously negotiating the terms of their restrictive immigration status. An example of this would be the very presence of a letter from an entity such as the "Härtefall Kommission," which proves the Akkouchs' motivation and willingness to actively resolve the issues at hand. Another instance is a scene during which Lial

and Hassan are shown working multiple jobs after Berlin's senator of the interior argues that migrant teenagers from the Middle East do not work and spend most of their free time committing crimes. In the following section I will closely focus on these and a select number of additional scenes that challenge officially assigned parameters, and therefore challenge statist normativity.

3.3 “DON'T PANIK – I'M MUSLIM.” DIS-IDENTIFICATION IN *NEUKÖLLN*

UNLIMITED

In the beginning of the film we hear several voices speaking in a mix of Arabic and German. The frame is black, with “Eine INDI FILM Produktion...in Koproduktion mit noifilm und RBB / in Zusammenarbeit mit ARTE” [An INDI FILM Produktion...in coproduction with noifilm and RBB / in collaboration with ARTE]and the rest of the official film sponsors superimposed in small lettering. As we see this displayed, a male voice yells an elongated “Eeeyyy duuuuuu!” [Heeeey youuuu!"] in the background. In the next shot, we see Hassan and Maradona Akkouch brushing their teeth in a bathroom. Hassan approaches the camera slowly with his mouth half open, full of toothpaste. One of their sisters comes in for a moment, rolls her eyes at them, and leaves right away. The viewer now hears a female voice saying the following: “Wenn ich von der Schule zurückkomme, dann mach ich sauber.” [When I come back from school, then I clean.”] The camera cuts to another room in which Lial is braiding another girl's hair, and her younger sister (the one who rolled her eyes at Hassan and Maradona a moment ago) is staring at her angrily. Lial continues: “Sie regt sich darüber auf, warum sie fegen muss...Ich hab's doch gestern gemacht, und davor auch.” “Mann, gestern hast du gepennt, und ich hab' als erste

saubergemacht...lüg doch nicht 'rum!' ["She gets irritated about that, that she has to sweep...I did it yesterday though, and (the day) before then too." "Man, yesterday you were napping and I was the first one who cleaned...stop lying!"] What follows are a series of exchanges between the two sisters, which are then interrupted when their mother opens the door and begins delegating chores. We then see Hassan and Maradona putting on their coats and getting ready to leave while the mother tells them that they need to clean their rooms when they come back. An irritated sibling forcefully drags a vacuum cleaner across the floor while Hassan quickly hands the ringing house phone to mom before exiting the apartment.

These first three minutes are crucial present ordinary events in a household. Imondi and Ratsch's establishing shots are inside the Akkouch family home, thus inviting us to see the social actors in one of the most private settings available. The directors consciously retain the camera at a neutralizing height. In other words, the camera angle is not higher than the person who is being filmed. There is also no voiceover introduction or commentary, no subtitles or other textual sign-posting within the shots that may inform the viewer in which country we may be or in which city, or maybe even on which street. Even though the film's title reveals part of the location, it is not "Neukölln, Berlin, 2007," for example. The difference between the two naming processes is that in the actual title of the film, Imondi and Ratsch step away from the overly methodological manner of identifying a location. The documented, quantifying side of migration in Germany is not at the forefront with this project. This is not to say that Imondi and Ratsch present an abstract signifying space in which they want to film the three siblings. On the contrary, they meticulously turn the focus on them – but in the case of *Neukölln Unlimited*, statistics become a footnote, and are not the center of the project.

The lack of an overly methodological approach, the informal setting in the home, and what occurs during the first three minutes specifically echo the fly-on-the-wall documentary approach. While the family's state assigned identities are a normative intervention, that is, a reduced and static version of their complex existence, the fly-on-the-wall method offers a chance at witnessing more complex, "real" identities. The siblings argue, we hear two different languages spoken either simultaneously or in a mix, and most importantly, the social actors do not show one bit of interest in the camera, which in turn increases its significance. In these particular moments, the camera's importance grows when its presence is ignored by those who are being filmed. The siblings' great comfort level with both the filmmakers and the camera in turn reinforces the uninterrupted flow of events. Continuing with the fly-on-the-wall approach, Imondi and Ratsch do not interfere with what is occurring behind the camera. When we see Lial's younger sister get angry at her, when the mother subsequently rolls her eyes at them, and especially when the same enraged sibling drags the vacuum cleaner behind her as if wishing to destroy it in the process, the continuity of the social actors' expressions feed their automatic reactions, which in turn are simultaneously captured and untouched. The social actors' spontaneous behavior as shown by common habitation routines, the informal setting of their apartment, and the lack of focus on methodologically assigned information (such as exact location and type of residential status, for example) consequently disarm any expectations the viewer may have had from the beginning. The only piece of information the audience receives about the social actors in these establishing continuities is that they live in an apartment and they argue because the children cannot agree on whose turn it is to clean up the mess in the living room. These characteristics describe a significant part of the world's population and do not force immediate official classification such as the name of the *Aufenthaltserlaubnis* for example. The

challenge to statist normativity in these first few minutes of *Neukölln Unlimited* is therefore successful because it de-identifies the social actors as strictly migrants before introducing them to the audience for the subsequent eighty-seven minutes.

Following the first scene in the apartment, the film showcases a series of opening credits that are set against a backdrop of the three main social actors – Hassan, Lial, and Maradona – participating in a local breakdancing show in Berlin Neukölln. After a minute of mashed up string music, hip hop and house beats, and Maradona being announced as the winner of the latest breakdance battle in his age group, the audio turns silent and the frame cuts to the following sign: “Landesamt für Bürger- und Ordnungsangelegenheiten / Ausländerbehörde / Zuwanderung – Aufenthaltstitel / Zuwanderung – Flüchtlinge / Neueinreisen.” [State Office for Citizen- and Government Matters / Aliens Department / Immigration – Residence Title for Specific Purposes / Immigration – Refugees / New Entries] Other information includes the weekly business hours as well as two different addresses depending on which office one needs to visit. We hear Lial’s voice: “Wo müssen wir denn hin? Hier?” [„Where do we have to go? Here?”] Hassan answers: “Nein...ich weiss nicht. Keine Ahnung.” [“No...I don’t know. No idea.”] The camera now shows them searching for a specific room in an office building. Hassan says: “Hier?” [“Here?”] Lial is frustrated as she responds with: “Ja, schön und gut. Keine Ahnung, Hassan.” [“Yeah, all right. No idea, Hassan.”] As she continues: “Ich hab’ keinen Bock, hier rumzusuchen” [“I am in no mood to search around here.”] and Hassan suggests that they look at a nearby chart, the camera captures the following text on a poster that is hanging on the wall:

Wir helfen Ihnen bei der Rückkehr in Ihr Heimatland / Die Internationale Organisation für Migration (IOM) führt im Auftrag des Bundes und der Bundesländer das Programm REAG (Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany) / GARP (Government Assisted Repatriation Programme) durch. Im Rahmen dieses Programms können Sie unter bestimmten

Voraussetzungen Reisebeihilfen sowie weitere finanzielle und organisatorische Unterstützung bei Ihrer Rückkehr oder Weiterwanderung erhalten.

[We will help you with your return to your home country / Under a mandate of federation and the states, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is organizing the program REAG (...) / GARP (...). In line with the program and under specific conditions you may be able to receive travel assistance as well as additional financial and organizational support in your return or continued migration.]

A little while later both Hassan and Lial are waiting at a counter window. The camera shows a government worker handing Lial her passport and for approximately five seconds the entire frame is filled with the page displaying her “Aufenthaltserlaubnis” [residence permit]. She laughs and says: “Na ja, das ist fast ‘ne Kartoffelparty.” [„Well, that’s almost a potato party.”] Hassan joins his sister and begins to joke around as to how the residential permits they received at that moment are almost cause to celebrate and have a “Kartoffelparty.” Hassan takes a moment and explains into the camera that he has a friend who, when he received his German citizenship, had a party whose theme was anything to do with potatoes. As Hassan waves his arms around and explains how extensive this “Kartoffel” theme was, he becomes visibly sadder. He finishes talking and the camera lingers to record him leaning with his right elbow on the counter – the same booth out which both Lial and he received their new visas from the employee sitting behind the glass. Hassan looks down quietly and folds the papers in his hand.

After the first scene in the social actors’ private space we watch Hassan and Lial negotiate two public spaces. The audience first observes the opening credits during which Hassan moderates the sold-out breakdancing competition. At the same time, Lial watches it as a member of the audience. Maradona wins the competition for his age-group. Dietmar and Ratsch then abruptly cut from the breakdancing, hip-hop beat induced atmosphere to a quiet office building that resembles a maze. The contrast in both sound and ambiance catch the viewer’s

attention. Dietmar and Ratsch once again do not immediately identify the exact whereabouts of this scene. Instead of focusing on the purpose of the location, the directors' main concern is recording the siblings' goal of finding the right counter. The first time the audience sees an officially assigned "record" and/or "identity" is in two instances: the 30-second take during which the viewer sees the *Ausländerbehörde* and the quick close-up of Lial's Lebanese passport with the new *Aufenthaltserlaubnis*. As is the tendency with *Neukölln Unlimited*, the scene in which Lial and Hassan spend time at the asylum office focuses on the two siblings, and not on the employee behind the counter. Those who represent or are connected to the legal structure, be it local, regional, or national, are not the focus of the film, or even this brief exchange.

Hassan Akkouch's reaction after the "Kartoffelparty" conversation is a poignant moment. The camera lingers on him as he lowers his head and stares at the ground as his body language and facial expression stand in stark contrast to the first three minutes of *Neukölln Unlimited*. While Hassan is relaxed and in his element at Maradona's breakdancing competition, his frustration and lack of control are evident as he grows increasingly quiet after discussing residential permits and potato-themed parties. A routine visit to the *Ausländerbehörde* triggers sadness and frustration for Hassan, both of which he attempts to momentarily hide from the camera. He is holding his passport, now most likely containing a number of residence permits of various levels of "tolerance" on part of the issuing government, as he stands in an office which routinely decides for how long and to what extent he may continue his daily existence within the national borders of Germany. While statist normativity collapses a refugee's, an asylum seeker's, and/or an illegal's official and personal identities into one, Hassan's official identity as an asylum seeker at the *Ausländerbehörde* sharply contrasts with a glimpse into Hassan's personal identity in the first three minutes of the documentary. Along with his siblings, Hassan

is active and comfortable in a public setting at a breakdancing competition, even leading the event as an MC. Dietmar and Ratsch capture both the spontaneous and relaxed environment in the beginning of the documentary as well as the awkward and obstructing experience of renewing a visa on camera. Their choice in editing, that is, immediately showing the visit to the asylum office after a dynamic and positive opening sequence, records an unconventional identity as compared to the official definitions.

The juxtaposition of officially assigned parameters, such as the experience at the *Auslandsbehörde*, and the autonomous negotiation on part of those who receive limiting statuses, such as the opening sequence at the breakdancing competition, continues in the subsequent scene. After Hassan and Lial leave having received updated visas, the camera cuts to the next shot in which both siblings make their way out of the building. Lial calls their mother and tells her the following as she intermittently switches between both Arabic and German: “Mama! Ich hab’ drei Jahre bekommen. Ich schwöre...Nein, Hassan hat nur für ein Jahr Aufenthalt bekommen wegen der Schule...Ich muss erst jetzt mal nach Hause, meine Sachen packen, danach ich muss gehen.” [“Mom! I got three years. I swear...No, Hassan got only one year of residence because of school...First I have to get home, pack my things, afterwards I have to go.”] Hassan corrects her German with the appropriate word order: “Danach *muss ich* gehen.” Here we may note that Hassan’s quiet frustration and lack of control while receiving a new visa and talking about the potato-themed party vanishes when the camera shows him correcting his sister’s grammar. Just moments before we witnessed Hassan’s reactions convey the difficulty and sternness accompanying an uncertain residence status. In the same manner in which he communicated at the asylum office, Hassan also corrects Lial’s statement in fluent German, the very language whose country limits him in an official capacity.

A little while after Hassan and Lial renew their residency permits we are back in the apartment, and the audience sees Hassan sorting through a large pile of clothes. While reaching into a different spot every few seconds, as if he is looking for something particular, we overhear him mentioning every member of the family followed by a short description of where s/he sleeps. While talking, Hassan occasionally looks in the direction of the camera but does not look into it directly – he is looking a little to his left as if talking to someone who is presumably standing close to the camera.

There are several elements that warrant our attention here. Once the audience is back in the privacy of the Akkouchs' residence, we learn more about the family. In addition to names, Hassan also sneaks in a spontaneous complaint or two about how his siblings do not fold their laundry and clean up after themselves. The continuity of this scene is crucial because even though it may be identified as the result of the filmmakers' interference (for example, if Imondi and Ratsch prompted Hassan to tell them more about the family members' sleeping arrangements), the execution is in the social actor's control. Hassan's body language and demeanor are once again indicative of the balanced relationship the social actors in *Neukölln Unlimited* have with the filmmakers. As viewers, we need to remember that the Akkouchs' residential status was unresolved at the time of filming, which elevates the very act of filming to a risky undertaking.

In the next shot Hassan is sitting on a futon next to a writing desk. His laptop is cradled on his lap and all his attention is focused on the computer screen. After a few seconds Hassan stands up, turns his back to the camera, leans over the backrest of the futon, and opens a window to let in some fresh air. He then assumes his previous sitting position on the futon. Subsequently

the frame is filled with an extreme close-up of his face as he continues to type. The audience hears Hassan in the following voiceover:

Da ich selber gerne rappe und meine eigene Songtexte schreibe, hatte ich schon oft mit dem Gedanken gespielt ein Buch zu schreiben. Nur hätte ich niemals daran gedacht, dass es meine eigene Geschichte sein wird. Erst beim Schreiben wird mir bewusst, dass die Geschichte meiner Familie, die ich als normal empfunden habe, für andere Menschen kaum vorstellbar ist.

[Since I like to rap and since I write my own songs, I've always played around with the idea of writing my own book. But I never would have thought that it would be my own (hi)story. It was only in the process of writing that I realized how my family's (hi)story, that I perceived as normal, was barely imaginable for others.]

Once Hassan finishes his last statement, we see a fade out to the first animated sequence in *Neukölln Unlimited*. In the voice-over, we hear Hassan describe the first time during which the Akkouch family was deported from Germany in 2003. Hassan offers personal reflections on how he felt as well as how his mother experienced her first epileptic shock because of the stress. Both the scene in which Hassan types on his computer and in which he speaks throughout the animated sequences are noteworthy, for they show him, a member of the family who experienced deportation, tell the story. While it appears that he may be reading a pre-written script, there is no doubt that this is a subjective, personal account of an event that greatly impacted the family. Phrases such as "I felt no sadness," "They entered all of the rooms with their shoes," "[they] counted us off as if we were a herd of sheep," and "All of that was of course of no avail" are personal sentiments reflecting the experience of someone who was labeled as an "asylum seeker" and/or "illegal." The filmmakers provided the visual and aural space, in the form of the animated sequence and Hassan serving as the voiceover narrator, respectively, so that Hassan may retell an experience that not only happened quickly, but one that was out of the family's control as it was fully driven by the official authorities. With that, Dietmar and Ratsch further

underline Hassan's mastery/command of the language. In the beginning of the sequence, we see another instance of the fly-on-the-wall approach when Hassan puts his laptop aside on the futon, gets up, and opens the window behind him. This brief occurrence does not significantly add to the development of the Akkouchs' story in *Neukölln* - it could have easily been edited out. However, including it shows one of the main social actors comfortably going about his daily routine. Hassan also shares with the viewers in a voiceover how he enjoys rapping and how he writes his own songs. This is just not another hobby, however. It is also not simply another therapeutic and creative outlet for him. For those who are labeled as "refugees," "asylum seekers," and/or "illegal," a document that conveys their identity is a deciding factor for their daily existence. In addition to deciding how one functions daily, it may also influence a personal sense of self-worth. Hassan's songs in German, the animated sequence in the film detailing the family's deportation, and the voiceover narrative accompanying it all coalesce in the film order to form a new document/documentary for individuals whose residence status still bears no permanent authentication.

The first part of the animated sequence in the film ends by showing the family being driven to Berlin Tegel Airport. An animated shot of their apartment building fades into the real-life version. In the subsequent shot we are back in the Akkouchs' living room and in the scene during which Lial sorts through a thick stack of mail and Hassan reads the letter from the *Härtefall Kommission*. Once Hassan and Lial stop arguing about what may need to be done if the rest of the family is forced back to Lebanon, one of the younger siblings who initially ratted out Maradona asks him: "Wann müssen wir denn gehen?" ["So when do we have to go?"] Maradona responds with: "Gar nicht." ["Not at all."] "Gar nicht?" "Auch wenn die kommen. Wir rennen weg und ich schmeiss dich aus'm Fenster." [„Even if they come. We'll run away and I'll throw

you out of the window.”] We now hear Hassan throw in: “Wie war das damals als wir abgeschoben wurden?” [“How was it back then when we were deported?”] Another male voice outside of the frame yells: “Er hat geweint!” [“He cried!”] while Hassan contributes: “Er hat gekotzt.” [“He threw up.”] The camera now cuts to Maradona as he is laughing and making faces at his older brothers who are making fun of him. Maradona eventually grows completely quiet and stares off into the distance. His sister Lial smiles faintly and as she scratches her left arm (that is still holding a large stack of opened mail), says: “Er hat Windpocken bekommen. Am Flughafen. Er hat auch hohes Fieber gehabt.” [“He got chickenpox. At the airport. He also had a high fever.”] The frame now cuts to the second part of the animated sequence during which Hassan continues to tell the story of the 2003 deportation to Lebanon. The audience hears in detail how the family was taken to Berlin Tegel airport, and how they were the first ones to be brought on the plane and had to sit all the way in the back. Hassan emphasizes at one point: “Wir schauten aus dem Fenster und sahen, wie wir unsere Heimat verloren. Ich konnte mit meinen 15 Jahren damit umgehen, aber was passierte mit meinen Geschwistern?” [„We looked out the window and saw how we lost our homeland. I, with my 15 years of age, could handle that, but what happened with my siblings?”]

The animated sequence in *Neukölln Unlimited* has one single overall purpose, which is to make the best attempt at recalling a crucial experience in the Akkouchs’ lives. This goal in and of itself presents a great challenge. When defining the documentary film form, scholars underline the importance of transmitting the closest version of the experiences in which the social actor(s) participate in front of the camera. Because animation does not feature actual, live human beings, but a version of them executed in a different medium, it may easily fall prey to criticism. By choosing animation, however, the filmmakers explicate upon and therefore recognize what

happened to the Akkouch family in two ways. First, they honor the chronology and the impact of what happened to the family. Second, as mentioned in my earlier discussion of the characteristics of dis-identification, the animated version of the family's deportation is the closest both they and we (as the audience) may get to hearing their experience. While having Hassan tell the story changes neither what happened or what may happen, having the asylum seeker share his own private account of the event distances him from this official title. Hassan and his family are not solely representations of their statuses as we have seen with the social actors in *Ausländer Raus* - they do not hide behind newspapers on a bus, they are not confined to a container, and they are not at the mercy of the public's opinion. They are still asylum seekers who are negotiating their official existence, but *Neukölln Unlimited* actually allows us to witness the family challenge assigned parameters and therefore actively push against the framework of statist normativity.

The transition from the animated sequence to the Akkouch residence show the director's and the cinematographer's awareness of the complex conditions they present to the viewer. Imondi and Ratsch bracket the animated deportation out of Germany with two scenes in which the same family is back with temporary residence statuses. The siblings remember the deportation in detail. Subtle behavioral aspects, such as Maradona first joking about how he got sick and then getting quiet suggest that this is an event that remains to be processed. However, we must not forget that it is during this exact scene that the Akkouchs received a letter from the Härtefall Kommission, indicating that they are proactively working through, and in some respects, against the official residential status assigned to them by the German government.

One way in which Hassan, Lial, and Maradona exhibit their strong attempts at changing their family's status for the better is through employment. In addition to attending school, the

oldest three siblings attempt to earn money so that the family can prove self-sufficiency and therefore be allowed to remain in Germany permanently. A little while after Hassan tells the story of the family's deportation and the discussion in the Akkouchs' living room, we see a large empty space that contains gym mats spread out on the floor and oversized mirrors hanging on the walls. As well as working at a local youth center "Die Scheune" ["The Barn"] in which he teaches breakdancing to children in the neighborhood, Hassan is member of a professional breakdance group called *Die Fanatix*. During this scene, we see Hassan and a few members of *Fanatix* as they sit on the floor and discuss a day trip they need to make for an upcoming performance. After briefly arguing about the logistics, which include Hassan telling the members that the event venue and the sponsors are paying for everything, including the hotel, they resume to practice their dance routine. In the subsequent shot, we are on the red carpet leading up to the *Fanatix* performance. The guys arrive and pose for photos as several official media photographers take their picture. We hear girls screaming outside of the frame while the group members joke around and the photographers ask them to move around and look at the camera. The background behind them features several sponsors' logos such as DVD/Video and BluRay Disc, as well as an advertisement for the TV show *Twilight*.

Hassan Akkouch, someone who received an additional year on his visa, tours as a successful (and paid) entertainer with his dance troupe. In another fly-on-the-wall inspired scene, Dietmar and Ratsch communicate to the audience that this is a professional endeavor, one that requires a large event venue, sponsors, and even a red carpet for the arriving performers. As the photographers who take their picture are part of official media outlets, a significant juxtaposition arises. Part of statist normativity is that it employs an official, fixed hierarchy in the commercial, legal, and/or political sectors. Hassan, officially defined as an asylum seeker

who has less than a year remaining on his visa and whose family was deported to Lebanon twice in their sixteen years of living in Germany, is a public celebrity. At a later point in the film *The Fanatix* even travel to Paris for an international dance competition. If we think back to chapter 1 and the established terminology that defines cross-border movements, we recall that an “asylum seeker” is defined as “an immigrant, *legal, or illegal*,” (emphasis my own) who is seeking to “take advantage of the 1951 UN Convention” to claim residence in the country in which s/he has come to be referred to as an “asylum seeker” (*Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought*). Castles and Miller define “asylum seekers” as “those not registered as residents...foreigners on temporary visits...whose applications are being processed.” Hassan’s officially documented existence as defined by the state is strongly indicative of an individual who is limited. Phrases such as “not registered,” “foreigners,” and “temporary” allude to a lack of protocol on part of the asylum seeker and to a brief stay in the country of arrival. This, in turn, presumes a state of not belonging, or at least not belonging in a capacity that would enable the individual to function comfortably. As we see from the scene in which Hassan plans a trip for a dance competition, practices, and arrives on the red carpet with the Fanatix, his level of functioning socially is distinct from the category of asylum seeker. If we were to watch this scene without any previous knowledge about him and his family’s residence status, we would not gather that he is an individual who must fight to remain in a country in which he is successful.

Following the Fanatix’ performance, which is an enormous hit with the audience, the camera cuts back to a street in the Neukölln neighborhood in which we see Maradona greet and talk to a few of his friends. He announces to them: “Ich hab’ mich angemeldet, bei Supertalent, am Sonntag. Die haben gelacht und so...” [“I signed up for Supertalent on Sunday. They

laughed around and all that...”] They joke around about Dieter Bohlen and the friends promise Maradona that they will vote for him every day. They also challenge him a little bit and point out to him that even though he is extremely talented, someone like “him” probably won’t make it to the final. Maradona looks unsure of himself for a moment, but then counters with: “Ich hab’ ja auch das Vorteil. Ich bin ja jung, mit mir kann man arbeiten.” [„I have the advantage. I’m young, one can work with me.“] One of his friends supports him by stating: “Ja, haste Recht. Guck’ mal, du bist nur 14, und guck’ mal was du alles geschafft und durchgemacht hast.” [„Yeah, you’re right. Look, you’re only 14 and look at everything you’ve accomplished and gone through.“]

After Maradona’s brief conversation with his friends, the frame returns to Hassan and a performance at Berlin’s *Wintergarten*. Hassan’s voice over informs the viewer that this is an unusual experience for him because the demographic of the audience is quite different: “Was mir halt nicht gefällt, und das ist ja auch eine neue Erfahrung für mich, und zwar sitzen die Leute, die essen ja halt ihre Schnitzel und, keine Ahnung, ihre Pommes, und sagen “Ja, was sind das denn für Hampelmänner auf der Bühne?”” [What I actually don’t like, and that’s a new experience for me, is that these people are sitting there, they’re eating their steak, and, I don’t know, their fries, and they say “Yeah, what kind of clowns are those (guys) on the stage?”] Although the *Wintergarten* contract presents its own set of challenges, including the fact, as Hassan confirms later on in a different part of the voiceover, that it is draining to do more than two shows in one day, he admits: “Es ist auf jeden Fall eine gute Referenz für mich.” [“It is definitely a good reference for me.”]

These two fly-on-the-wall scenes in which Maradona talks about *Supertalent* and Hassan comments on his opportunity at *Wintergarten* demonstrate how the social actors negotiate a new

opportunity. Although Maradona causes certain problems for the family by repeatedly getting thrown out of school, he focuses on the skills he has as a break-dancer although he was laughed at. He also counters his friends who “joke” that he may not even make it, most likely because he is Lebanese, Muslim, and an asylum seeker. Hassan similarly handles his new opportunity to regularly dance at the Wintergarten. The fact that his performance style appears to be an unusual repertoire for the venue - that it does not “typically belong” - adds to the already present feeling of having to fight for permanent residence in Germany. However, his perspective is positive, as he only looks to what will further his success as a (paid) dancer, which ultimately feeds into the overarching goal of proving to state authorities that the family can sustain a life in Germany.

A little while later we see Lial managing the logistics for a local boxing event called “Amadu.” In an earlier scene, the viewer could witness Lial as she is working at a local fitness center, a job that is both part of her vocational training and the reason why she was able to receive a three-year residential permit in the beginning of the documentary. In addition to coordinating the sporting events as scheduled by her manager, Lial and one other intern are also responsible for ensuring that the event runs smoothly from start to finish. While we see Lial backstage directing other employees as to what needs to be done at Amadu, we hear her voiceover share the following with the viewer:

Die Angst ist immer da, dass sie einmal wieder vor der Tür stehen, und sagen: “Deine Family (*Lial uses the English word here*) muss jetzt gehen. [...] Also falls meine Familie abgeschoben wird, würde ich nicht sagen “Ich habe versagt,” weil ich hab’ mir ja ziemlich viel Mühe gegeben und das weiss meine Familie. Und was ich noch machen kann ist mich nicht zu gefährden.

[The fear is always there, that they are standing once again in front of the door and that they say: „Your family has to leave now. [...] So if my family gets deported, I wouldn’t say “I failed,” because I tried really hard and my family knows that. And what I can do is not hurt myself.]

After a brief visit by Maradona and the boxing match, we see Lial and her co-worker receive feedback from the manager, who expresses his overall satisfaction with how the event unfolded.

Imondi and Ratsch capture Lial in her productive routine. Like her siblings, she is functioning within the established social system in Germany by going to school and by completing vocational training, which grants her a longer stay in the country than her brother's. As part of the expository/essayistic approach, this particular scene also includes one of the three voice overs in the documentary in which Lial talks about the constant fear she has that they all may be deported again. However, she shares the same reasonable perspectives as Hassan and Maradona, which is that she is doing the best she can to meet the requirements for a longer, or permanent residence.

Once Lial's manager finishes speaking, the sound cuts to a musical beat and immediately in the next shot we are on the passenger side in a car with Hassan, who is driving. The music is part of a radio announcement (in the car), and we hear the following: "Guten Abend! Und herzlich willkommen zu einem "Klipp und Klar Spezial" aus Berlin Neukölln, und zwar genau aus dem Jugendklub Manege. Eine neue Initiative für Straftäter, das wollen wir diskutieren heute Abend unter anderem...mit Berlins Innensenator Ehrhart Körting." ["Good evening! And welcome to a "Klipp und Klar" special from Berlin Neukölln, specifically from the youth club Manege. A new initiative for criminal offenders, that's what we want to discuss this evening among other things...with Berlin's Senator of the Interior Ehrhart Körting.] We then observe as a crowd of children and teenagers gathers around Manege's entrance, with some of them pressing their faces against the windows. In the next shot, we see Hassan standing opposite Berlin's secretary of the interior. He addresses him with the following:

Wenn Sie zum Internet gehen, da werden sie tausende Beispiele davon sehen, dass zum Beispiel an meiner Familie nichts falsch ist, und trotzdem wurden wir abgeschoben. Und dann sind wir wieder gekommen, und trotzdem hat man wieder versucht uns abzuschieben. Wir waren bei der Härtefall Kommission, und sie haben uns zugestimmt, und trotzdem haben Sie es abgelehnt. Also meiner Meinung nach schüren Sie Hass bei mir.

[If you go online, you will see thousands of examples that there is nothing wrong with my family, and still we were deported. And then we came back and still authorities tried to deport us. We were at the Committee for Hardship Cases, and they agreed with us, and still you rejected it. So, in my opinion you're fueling hatred in me."]

Körting listens to Hassan and then offers his perspective:

Wir haben ja eine ganze Reihe von Familien aus dem Libanon, da haben wir das besondere Problem, dass sie hierher gekommen sind, und dann auch alle anderen Familienmitglieder nachgeschleust wurden, das müssen wir ja auch bedenken. Die Kinder haben ja mit der Problematik meistens nichts zu tun. Die Eltern sind ja teilweise gekommen, und haben den Staat beschissen.

[We have an entire group of families from Lebanon, and there we have the special problem that they came here, and then all the other family members were dragged along, we also have to think about that. The children mostly have nothing to do with that problem. The parents came and they cheated the state.]

At this point another onlooker who was standing close to Hassan, an elderly male individual, counters with: "Das sind ja einfachste Leute, die haben doch keine Vorstellung davon...die wollten ja einfach weg." [„These are the simplest people, they don't have a concept...they just wanted to get away."] As he sees that Körting's facial expression conveys doubt and disbelief, he adds: "Ja, mit dem Bürgerkrieg in Libanon, das war ja schon ernst." ["Yeah, well, with the civil war in Lebanon, that was serious."] Körting underscores once again that, according to what he has seen, migrants came to Germany from Lebanon with forged papers. He then says that it would make sense to leave the children here, a statement that immediately forces Hassan to react with the following:

Sie können ja eine Familie nicht auseinandernehmen. Wäre ich dort geblieben, als Sie mich abgeschoben haben, wäre ich jetzt tot nach zwei, drei

Kriegen mit Israel. So muss man das auch sehen. Sie sagen, die Shiiten sind nicht mehr politisch verfolgt, ...wenn Sie uns in ein Land abschieben, wo Hezbollah die meiste Macht dort hat, ...das ist ein Krisengebiet, und da kann man Leute nicht einfach abschieben.

[You cannot separate a family. If I had stayed there after you deported me, I would have been dead after two, three wars with Israel. One has to understand it like that. You say that Shiites are no longer politically hunted, ...when you deport us to a country, in which Hezbollah has the most power...and that's a crisis area, and one cannot just deport people there.]

Körting listens intently and confirms that while what Hassan describes is valid, he also wonders: “Wenn jetzt eine Familie kommt mit sieben oder acht Kindern, dann frage ich mich: wie kann ich diese Familie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland integrieren?” [“When a family comes along with seven or eight children, then I ask myself: how can I integrate this family into the Federal Republic of Germany?”] At this point, Hassan has his arms crossed and is looking away into the distance while listening. Körting continues: “Da frage ich mich, machen [die Kinder] eine Ausbildung? Sind sie zur Schule gegangen? Da habe ich manchmal Namen vor mir, die über zwanzig Ermittlungsverfahren gegen sie haben.” [“I ask myself then, are the children getting an education? Did they go to school? Sometimes I have names in front of me that have over twenty preliminary proceedings pending.”] Another bystander, a woman who had been listening to the conversation and who had also offered a couple of short comments now urges both Hassan and Körting to move because they have to finish setting up for the actual “Klip und Klar Spezial.” Once Hassan leaves and begins to drive back home, the viewer is once again in the passenger seat. Hassan caps off the scene with the following: “Und meine Schwester, nachdem wir wieder gekommen sind, hatte Bulimie, sie war intensiv in einem Krankenhaus extra für Bulimie Kranke. Mein kleiner Bruder hat ADS. Jedes Mal, wenn es an der Tür klingelt, hat er Angst. Die wissen nicht, was für Folgen das hat...für Menschen.” [„And my sister, after we came back, had bulimia, she was in a hospital especially for those suffering from bulimia. My

younger brother has ADHD. Every time when the door rings, he gets scared. They don't know what consequences that has...for people.”]

Dietmar and Ratsch show Hassan, Lial, and Maradona doing their part to help the family attain permanent status in Germany. Hassan's performances with the *Fanatix*, Lial's internship at the local fitness center, and Maradona's acceptance into *Supertalent* purposely appear before the heated exchange with Ehrhart Körting. In addition to managing their family's finances (in an intermittent scene we see a close-up of Hassan and Lial's hands as they count money that they earned and compare it with the bills), the two siblings are fulfilling the official requirements as put forth by the government such as going to school to complete their diploma. The argument Körting makes in regard to often witnessing young immigrants commit multiple crimes is set against four examples in which the Akkouch siblings attempt to both fulfill their personal career goals and contribute to improving their family's residential status. The filmmakers do not brand the authorities, including the worker at the Ausländerbehörde and Körting, as malicious or as threatening. It is completely valid that the federal government of Germany decides as to how the residential permits are structured and Körting is a local politician who threw a wrench in the Akkouchs' appeal through the Härtefall Kommission. Nevertheless, the official influence of governing bodies is cinematically depicted in a multifaceted interaction with the social actors. The complexity surfaces when the viewer can witness a direct interaction between two sides who more often than not, cannot directly speak for themselves, but through middle-men such as the media and/or scholarly writings that strictly juxtapose those “in power” and those who are “oppressed.” Hassan can directly ask questions and Körting, while not putting Hassan's mind at ease, stays and attempts to work through a tense and challenging dialogue. In this particular moment, the authorities who directly affect the residential status of someone like the Akkouch

family are neither untouchable nor do they exist as a third-party abstraction. We see this as Hassan once more references the family's deportation and thereby pushes Körting to evaluate the risks of placing immigrants into simplified collective identities as well as reevaluate future decision-making that results from such an approach.

3.4 CONCLUSION: AUTONOMY IN PROCESS

Dietmar Ratsch and Agostino Imondi's first collaborative effort, *Neukölln Unlimited*, began with a chance encounter between Ratsch and Maradona at a breakdancing competition in 2007. The spontaneity of that meeting led to a close relationship between the filmmakers and the Akkouch family, which ultimately resulted in an intricate cinematic depiction of their lives. Ratsch and Imondi reached beyond the simplifying juxtaposition of "us" versus "them" and "native" or "citizen" vs. "other" or "foreigner" to show a multifaceted existence that ranges from private daily routines to familial milestones as well as public success and recognition. By utilizing fly-on-the-wall and expository/essayistic documentary approaches, Imondi and Ratsch captured scenes in which the siblings' personal and professional the accomplishments are juxtaposed with the limiting characteristics of the family's official residence and status challenges in Germany.

The result is an example of challenging statist normativity through dis-identification. *Neukölln Unlimited* shows how the Akkouch family established a complex existence that allowed its members to negotiate the official social and political assignments of the state. We first learn about the limits imposed onto the siblings by their respective visa statuses before witnessing how their actions not only counter these limits, but how the siblings also succeed. Even before the documentary, Hassan, Lial, and Maradona lived in a type of "public eye," even

if only on a local and regional level. Their respective successes in the entertainment industry were above the average achievements of someone with a permanent residence status or citizenship. We therefore do not witness the family as an abject victim of the state apparatus, as individuals who are weak. However, we also do not see a “happy ending” in which the family members’ respective residence permits progress. What we do gain, however, is complex, creative rendition of the family’s reality at the time of filming. In a way, their “permanent” document comes in the form of the documentary, for *Neukölln Unlimited* goes beyond the stamped passport by juxtaposing officially assigned parameters by the state apparatus and the autonomous negotiation on part of those who have been assigned this official status. The result is a separation of personal and official identities (as they are one in statist normativity). The personal, everyday identity in *Neukölln Unlimited* - and as such, in the actual lives of the Akkouch family - is a specific, productive self that functions successfully on a daily basis. It overshadows the inexact, limiting language of what a “refugee,” an “asylum seeker,” and/or an “illegal” is officially.

**4.0 “THE REFUGEE IS...FOOD FOR BIOPOLITICS.” – CRITICAL
KNOWLEDGESCAPES AS A RESPONSE TO STATIST NORMALITY IN URSULA
BIEMANN’S *CONTAINED MOBILITY AND X-MISSION***

A single-shot conveys the text: “Prologue: Afghanistan 1989.” Immediately thereafter, the following content is visually superimposed onto a multiple-layer video montage as subtitles: “In 1989, the Mujahedin forced the Soviet troops to leave Afghanistan. By then, Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan had grown to 5 million. It marks the beginning of a whole new era in which the west shifts focus from the image of the Cold War enemy to what it calls militant Islam.” Visually the mountainous regions of Afghanistan alternate with groups of civilian children, their mothers, as well as gatherings of male figures who are holding various weapons. Two minutes later, the viewer follows a shaky, handheld camera through a narrow alleyway. Concrete walls bracket the cinematic frame and sounds of children playing and laughing may be heard in the background. The film pauses abruptly in-between changing frames so that two transparent images overlap each other. Electronic music begins and a female voice begins to narrate: “To become a refugee is a fundamental change in status as a human being, in who you are, what other people think you are, where you can live, how you can move, what you can work, if it counts what you say.” Upon finishing, the same voice begins to offer definitions of the refugee through phrases such as “THE VICTIM...THE STATELESS PERSON...THE POST-POLITICAL SUBJECT...THE BORDER CONCEPT...FOOD FOR BIOPOLITICS.” Each of the terms is

separately typed up on the screen “in real time” and then erased. This is repeated for each new phrase.

The above description is a brief excerpt from Ursula Biemann’s 2008 film essay *X-Mission*. In her own reflections on the work, Biemann explains that her initial motivation to make the film was to find a way to speak of refugees, and in this case, of Palestinians, without falling into the “inevitability of positioning them in relation to Israel or to the conflict” (Biemann *X-Mission* 94). Biemann’s intention was not to deviate from the problems or to depoliticize the complex subject matter. Instead, she aimed to avoid the trap of what she calls “tired binary arguments,” to rethink the theoretical concept and lived experience of the refugee in conjunction with discourses focusing on global networks of contemporary migrant communities. Biemann’s reason for starting *X-Mission* with images of Afghan refugees from 1989 and with photographs made in Afghanistan by the UN Refugee Agency from 2001 is due to her belief that other forms of “political extraterritoriality,” such as the Al Qaeda network and the US anti-terrorist paradigm, had a decisive impact on the Palestinian condition today (Biemann, *X-Mission* 94-6). Ultimately, Biemann shapes the narrative in *X-Mission* to explore the logic of the refugee camps as one of the “oldest extraterritorial zones.” Taking the Palestinian refugee camps as a case in point, *X-Mission* engages with historical, legal, and symbolic discourses, among others, to demonstrate that the Palestinian refugee represents the “exception within the exception.”

Ursula Biemann is an example of the proliferation of academic and visual work on border issues, geography, and migration. Biemann graduated from art school in the 1980s, a time when the discourse on art, like other academic domains, was considerably influenced by other theoretical currents such as ethnography, cultural and media studies, postcolonial criticism, and feminist theories, to name a few. These interactions provided instruments for reformulating the

domain of symbolic production. Aesthetic practice began to require different frames of reference, all of which would interlock to provide a discursive expansion. Aesthetic practice, that is to say, the visual arts, would have to position itself in relation to other terrains of knowledge production. This coincided with the intensification of globalization processes, and consequently, towards content oriented work in the arts.

Biemann edits, curates, and displays “informational noise,” such as military surveillance data, flight records, satellite maps, body-size information and scans, web pages, intertitle or subtitle commentaries, and more traditional footage of the landscape - the geography - in question. Biemann constructs this in a way that points out the complexity and arbitrariness of the violent production and extraction of “the sociality of human bodies” (Musiol, “Museums” 165). She deploys new technologies in her work, but not for the sake of objectivity, efficiency, and clarity. Working against industrial paradigms of user-friendliness and transparency, Biemann “radicalizes the process of arranging, editing, and cataloguing material and human data” (Musiol, “Museums” 168).

This chapter engages with two film essays by Ursula Biemann, namely *Contained Mobility* (2004) and *X-Mission* (2008). After situating Biemann's work within the theoretical engagements from preceding chapters, three central matters as part of her work take shape, including genre strategies of the essay film, the concept of “knowledgescapes,” and elements of critical geographies. The three elements coalesce to form the comprehensive approach of “critical knowledgescapes” to demonstrate that *Contained Mobility* and *X-Mission* form a multidimensional response to statist normativity as outlined in the first chapter.

4.1 SITUATING THE THINKING SO FAR

The predominant notion in prior discussions is the interplay between standardized perception of cross-border movement and the complexity that resists such an approach. The foundational change in the status of the border after the fall of Austrian, Ottoman, German, and Russian empires gave way to fixed notions of self-governance. On the one hand, we had the formation of nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth century and the reassertion of this development through bilateral legal agreements such as the 1951/1967 Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees and through organizations such as the European Court of Justice and its law enforcement agency, Europol. Even without leaving the notion of the nation-state and its essentially geopolitical, but diplomatically acknowledged agreements, treaties such as the refugee conventions are both reactive and reductive. The phrase “proving a well-founded fear of execution” (as part of the Conventions), for example, is general and highly subjective language. If a bilateral, legal document provides inexact guidelines for deciding the status of a migrant, then the process will inevitably result in multiple interpretations, and, more importantly, divergent circumstances of belonging. For instance, what one nation-state may accept as the parameters for refugeedom or conditions for granting asylum, another may deem insufficient, ultimately attributing the status of “illegal” to the individuals in question.

On the other hand, the attempt to systematize a comprehensive and defining characteristic of human behavior such as migration resulted in narratives that countered such fixity. A migrant’s unpredictable circumstances motivate the individual crossing the border, such as the perceived “asylum seeker,” the “refugee,” and the “illegal,” to independently subvert the official standard, to step outside of the terrain of statist normativity to acquire the benefits it promises those who are formally and securely “included.” This complex interaction on the socio-political

front impels aesthetic practice, as we have seen in Christoph Schlingensief's 2001 happening *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container* and in the 2010 documentary *Neukölln Unlimited* by Agostino Imondi and Dietmar Ratsch. Both works capture the discrepancies between migration controls in the country of destination and the needs of the migrant. However, *Ausländer Raus!* and *Neukölln Unlimited* differ from one another in that they present these discrepancies at varying stages. By overidentifying with the power discourse, consequently producing what he termed as "Widersprüchlichkeit" [contrariness], and allowing it to play out without any type of protocol among the public, Schlingensief confirmed the asylum seeker's reality at the turn of the new millennium. *Neukölln Unlimited*, on the other hand, challenges the official definition, expectations, and parameters attributed to those characterized as "asylum seekers," "illegals," and/or "refugees." By showing how members of the Akkouch family actively negotiate the official social and political assignments of the state, *Neukölln Unlimited* disidentifies Hassan, Lial, and Maradona as abject, voiceless victims of the state.

The postdramatic happening, as seen in *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefs Container*, and the fly-on-the-wall and expository/essayistic documentary approaches, as seen in *Neukölln Unlimited*, focus on the continual interaction between migration control and the needs of the migrant. Neither work provides a clear outcome or a definite solution as the focus is precisely on that which the migrant experiences: an in-flux existence and a steady negotiation of official parameters resulting in moments of discernable identity. Pointedly stated, *Ausländer Raus!* and *Neukölln Unlimited* undermine fixity assigned by the nation-state and its geopolitical bodies to reveal a significantly more intricate network of exchanges between individual adaptability and national authority, between the restrictions of federally issued documents and the way human agency transforms these limits into effective habitation practices.

A third form of aesthetic practice that focuses on the complex interaction between national authority and human agency is the work of Ursula Biemann. Between 1998 and 2008, the Zurich-based artist, writer, and film essayist especially focused on migration, globalization, gendered forms of labor, and the limitations and desperations of mobility in late capitalism. Scholars of Biemann's work emphasize the artist's innovative approach to feminist materialism, which shifts the ground of analysis from so-called patriarchy to globalized capitalism's gendered divisions of labor. Angela Dimitrakaki, for instance, highlights the artist's focus on "the circuits where women find 'their place' in the global capitalist economy" (Dimitrakaki 205-6). Imre Szeman explains that Biemann's video essays draw out "the physical reality of the new global order, a materiality that is also still too often passed over in discussions that focus on the spectrality of new communications technologies" (Szeman 97).

Biemann had and continues to employ a specific approach in her essay films, encapsulating the early conjunction between geography and visual culture. She calls her videos "... geographies, if by geography we mean a visual form of spatializing territorial and human relations" (Biemann, "Writing Video" 1). Although Biemann insists that she solely operates with concepts from geography rather than discourses on human rights or identity, her video works display an acute awareness of both the socio-political circumstances influencing the social actors and of how their legal and personal identities are constructed and represented through film. Biemann's process of making a film essay reflects this cognizance in two parallel approaches. Before she begins filming, Biemann first discerns a geographical and political area of interest for her art practice, such as the gendered division of labor on the U.S-Mexico border in *Performing the Border* (1999), for example. She then traces out a field of research at the juncture of different forms of knowledge production in which her chosen geographical and

political area could be situated. Biemann simultaneously engages with contemporary geopolitical and social transformations, and with the form in which one may address these in the expanded aesthetic field.

Biemann describes herself as a video essayist, and her works are usually classified as experimental video art or essay films rather than any one of the standard documentary styles, such as poetic-experimental or fly-on-the-wall, for example. In her own writing, Biemann follows the discursive approaches of essay films and critical geography. She emphasizes the dynamic process of her works rather than the reception they receive by stressing that reflexive works expose their own process of construction, which in turn “opens our senses to the modes of capitalist production organizing contemporary biopolitics” (Biemann and Szeman 37). Aesthetically, Biemann pushes even the film essay by experimenting with multi layered and synthetic soundscapes, asynchronous sound-image relations, intellectual montage, and textual as well as graphic overlays in a single frame that often re-signify known information. For example, Biemann films the same subject through “mutually cancelling frameworks” (Musiol, “Museums” 168). Biemann may show a Mauritian citizen with rights and as an illegal migrant with no rights, or a Mexican citizen and empowered consumer as a disempowered female worker in a transnational corporation that suspends her rights, as a breadwinner and head household and as a prostitute exposed to horrific violence. Such juxtapositions reveal the vast incongruities of human rights norms, where physical movement across nationally defined borders make the individuals performing the act “information-collection-apparatuses” instead of persons protected under (inter)national legal frameworks. The resulting composite visual imagery Biemann creates has been considered a “picture trail of human rights,” demonstrating the aesthetics of the global

distribution of bodies as it undermines the “universalist fictions” of international human-rights documents and bilateral agreements concerning cross-border movement (Sliwinski 19-20).

Biemann’s work may be grouped into two phases. Between 1998 and 2008 she produced the first set of film essays that engage with the concept of the border, ultimately resulting in a collection of eight works, including *Performing the Border* (1999), *Remote Sensing* (2003), *Europlex* (2003), *Contained Mobility* (2004), *Black Sea Files* (2005), and *X-Mission* (2009). Her second thematic interest began in 2012 in which she focuses on bioecology and human influence on natural resources such as oil-and-mining frontiers in the Ecuadorian Amazon, flooding in Bangladesh, and tar sands of the boreal forests in Northern Canada. The film essays in this series include *Egyptian Chemistry* (2012), *Deep Weather* (2013), *Forest Law* (2014), and *Acoustic Ocean* (2018).

There are three central matters in Ursula Biemann’s works. First, Biemann deploys genre strategies of the essay film. Second, Biemann develops the cultural-anthropologically inspired concept of “knowledgescapes.” Third, Biemann’s works include compelling representations of discourses in critical geography. These three essential elements, namely genre strategies of the essay film, the concept of knowledgescapes, and core elements of critical geographies, do not share an explicit discursive connection, for they originate in three separate disciplines. However, the essay film, knowledgescapes, and critical geographies link in a theoretical and, at times, in an ideological manner. Connecting these three components gives us a dynamic and comprehensive approach when analyzing a complex aesthetic product such as Ursula Biemann’s works. To better illustrate each matter, the following discussions engage with the essay film, knowledgescapes, and elements of critical geographies in greater detail and with examples from four out of the six film essays as part of Biemann’s first thematic approach, namely *Performing*

the Border (1999), *Remote Sensing* (2001), *Europlex* (2003), and *Black Sea Files* (2005). Although one or more films demonstrates each element, the pairings are not mutually exclusive and may be combined differently. Like Hans-Thies Lehmann's postdramatic theater devices, genre strategies of the essay film, knowledgescapes, and characteristics of critical geographies overlap and are best conceived as constantly interacting with one another.

4.2 EMERGING CRITICAL KNOWLEDGESCAPES

Essay films are arguably one of the most innovative and popular forms of filmmaking. Although essay films have been around since the dawn of cinema - they emerged shortly W.K.L. Dickson's *Record of a Sneeze* (1894) as well as Lumière Brothers' *Workers Emerging from a Factory* (1894) - essay films do not immediately spark the recognition sci-fis, period dramas, and action thrillers may evoke, for example. Nevertheless, the essay film has been particularly insurgent since the new millennium. The essay film has also steadily continued to engage in unfinished subject matters, that is, in occurrences and themes on which there is no final resolution. Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), as well as Chris Marker's final work *Stopover in Dubai* (2011), for example, retells social tragedies, presents politically controversial subject matters, and reconstructs security footage of a public assassination, respectively. Hito Steyerl's 2014 essay film *How Not To Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational* presents five lessons on the subject on invisibility. It mocks the idea that in an age of global technology and personalized access, human beings are able to become invisible and have genuine privacy.

Looking at the film essay through a broader chronological trajectory, other prominent essay filmmakers include Harun Farocki, Alexander Kluge, Harmut Bitomsky, Jean-Luc Godard, and Patrick Keillor. Individual films such as Jean Rouch's *Le Maître fous* (1955), Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* (1955), and Chris Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1958), which André Bazin analyzed according to the film essay form for the first time (Goldfarb), proved to be crucial milestone and a source of inspiration for filmmakers such as Raúl Ernesto Ruiz, Werner Herzog (specifically his 1972 *Land of Silence and Darkness*), as well as Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1973), and Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage* (1982).

4.2.1 Thinking, preserved – or on the essay film

What exactly then, is an essay film? In film criticism, the term “essay film” stands for a self-reflective and self-referential documentary cinema, a hybrid form that blurs the lines between fiction and nonfiction (Goldfarb). Film historian and critic Paul Arthur suggests that “one way to think about the essay film is as a meeting ground for documentary, avant-garde, and art film impulses” (Arthur 62). Film scholar Nora Alter insists that the essay film is “not a genre, as it strives to be beyond formal, conceptual, and social constraint. Like ‘heresy’ in the Adornean literary essay, the essay film disrespects traditional boundaries, is transgressive both structurally and conceptually, it is self-reflective and self-reflexive” (Alter 171).

Film scholar and theoretician Laura Rascaroli asserts that we must “resist the temptation to crystallize it into a genre” (Rascaroli 39). Instead, Rascaroli argues that heresy and openness are among the essay film's key markers (Rascaroli 39). She maintains that the film essay is a mode, defined by specific textual commitments and rhetorical strategies. These commitments and strategies are best put to use if, according to Rascaroli, we utilize them to explore the ways

in which the essay film is “appropriated, stretched, and reinvented by filmmakers and videomakers” (Rascaroli 39-40).

There are two diverging approaches when it comes to the scholarship that has engaged with the essay film. First, there is the question whether the essay film may be a separate genre. Second, when it comes to identifying the core features and with that, the history of the essay film, scholars disagree as to whether one should approach the definition by way of a literary or by way of a documentary genealogy. Documentary film scholar and professor of Critical Studies Michael Renov writes in his 2004 work *The Subject of the Documentary* that the essay film may encompass the primary functions that documentaries have displayed since their origin (although at times over- or under-favoring one or more of them): to record, reveal and preserve, to persuade or promote, to express, and to analyze or interrogate (Renov 70). In other words, the essay film may encompass all the functions that Renov ascribes to the documentary (71-2), of which the essay film is an ever more vital component (Rascaroli 33), and all those abilities and inclinations that for a long time were not seen as part of its dominion (Renov 70, 73). Renov sees the separation between defining the essay film through either a literary or a documentary genealogy unnecessary, even unproductive. Renov observes: “[t]he essay form, notable for its tendency towards complication (digression, fragmentation, repetition, and dispersion) rather than composition, has, in its four-hundred-years history, continued to resist the efforts of literary taxonomists, confounding the laws of genre and classification, challenging the very notion of text and textual economy” (70). If one of the approaches in defining the origins of the film essay, namely the essayistic, has elusiveness and purposeful complication as its main qualities, then a clear separation may prove unnecessary and ineffective in further developing theoretical approaches.

Additional scholarly definitions of the essay film confirm this. French and Film Studies scholar Réda Bensmaïa, for example, pronounces the essay film in the 1987 work *The Barthes Effect: The Essay as a Reflective Text* as “heretical, open, free, and formless...truly...the postmodern matrix of all generic possibilities” (Bensmaïa 92). Arthur identifies it as a “multi-channel stew” that operates on multiple discursive levels, including image, speech, titles, and music (Arthur 59). For Rascaroli, two features stand out as specific to the essay film, namely reflexivity and subjectivity (Rascaroli 25). Film critic and theorist Noël Burch similarly focuses on elements of reflexivity and aesthetic attitude by claiming that the essay film is a “cinema of pure reflection,” where “the subject becomes the basis of an intellectual construct, which in turn is capable of engendering the overall form and even the texture of a film without being denatured or distorted” (Burch 162).

Historically speaking, the French New Wave (1958 to late 1960s) helped popularize short essay films while New German Cinema (1962-1982, apart from Rainer Werner Fassbinder) saw its own resurgence due to a broad interest in examining German history. Starting as a trickle during the sixties, the essay gathered speed through the seventies before developing as a “recognizable phenomenon” in the mid-1980s and on. Since the early nineties, essay film production increased considerably, ultimately becoming “nonfiction cinema’s most rapidly evolving genre” (Arthur 58, 62).

Filmmaker and researcher Guy Fihman believes that the first mention of the term “essay” in a cinematographic context occurs in Sergei Eisenstein’s notes on his own work, specifically in an entry on October 13, 1927 in which Eisenstein discusses plans to make a film of *The Capital: “October presents a new form of cinematographic work—a collection of essays on the series of themes that form October”* (Eisenstein quoted in Fihman 41). In his 1961 *Theory of Film*

Practice, Noël Burch mentions another early, unrealized project by the Belgian actor and film director Jacques Feyder, who “hoped to adapt Montaigne’s essays to film” (Burch 162). Although Burch does not mention a specific date, Feyder was active as a leading film director in the 1920s and continued to make films until his death in 1948.

The first individual to engage theoretically with the term “essay film” was the avant-gardist, painter, and film experimenter Hans Richter. Richter published the article "Der Filmessay: eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms" [„The Film Essay: A New Form of the Documentary Film“] in 1940 in the Swiss-German newspaper *Bas(e)ler Nationalzeitung*. Richter argued that the task for the documentary is to shape theoretical content into a more relevant form because one can no longer rely on the depiction of an object, a person, or an event for the sole purpose of representation. To illustrate his point, Richter uses the example of making a documentary about the function of the stock exchange. In addition to representing the discernible stages of a stock exchange in chronological order, Richter argues that other aspects must be referenced (and thus, represented) in the film, such as the economy of the country in question, the needs of the public, the laws of the market, supply and demand, etc. In other words, one must try to engage with and to render the idea that one has of the stock exchange. The documentary film ought to make theoretical ideas visible on the screen. Richter claims that the designation “essay” is appropriate for even in the realm of literature, the “essay” refers to the treatment of difficult topics in a mostly accessible form (Richter 196-7).

To make visible the imperceptible world of imaginations, thoughts, and ideas, according to Richter, the essay film may neither be bound to the representation of external ideas nor to a chronological sequence. Instead, the essay film ought to pull together “material for view from

everywhere and for this reason...one may jump throughout space and time...as long as it serves as an argument for the visualization of an idea” (Richter 197).

We may draw four main characteristics of the essay film. First, essay films center neither around popular, public personalities nor do they conform to standard histories and strict chronological narratives (Corrigan 58). This consequently sets an essay film apart from classical documentaries. Instead, an essay film blends several clashing timeframes in addition to borrowing idioms from *cinéma vérité* as well as adopting poetic, expository/essayistic and fly-on-the-wall documentary approaches (Arthur 59, Goldfarb, *Oxford Film Dictionary*, Rascaroli 37-8). We may see the lack of popular, public personalities and the absence of strict chronological narratives in the works of Harun Farocki, for example. One of the most prominent essay filmmakers, the Czech-born, Germany based Farocki “place[d] a wryly minimalist stamp on the anatomy of class relations under late capitalism” (Arthur 61-2). Across nearly 20 nonfiction film works, Farocki cultivated a “studiously deadpan formal repertoire” (62) in the form of long takes and mechanical camera movements as well as an increasing fascination with simulated experience and commodity fetishism.

Several filmmakers outside of France and Germany have also taken to the essay film to comment upon pivotal, yet underestimated historical moments as well as unresolved social conditions. Alexander Sokurov’s 1994 documentary *Dukhovnye golosa. Iz dnevnikov voyny. Povestvovanie v pyati chastyakh*, for example, is a five-hour piece that chronicles the experiences during which Sokurov accompanied Russian troops assigned to a frontier military post at the Tajikistan/Afghanistan border. While unnamed tribal forces occasionally engaged the troops in skirmishes, Sokurov’s documentary mainly chronicles the downtime between activity. Although Sokurov filmed the majority of *Dukhovnye golosa* in the style of fly-on-the-wall

documentary, the first episode is an essay that uses a fixed, single shot lasting approximately forty minutes and extensive voice-over from the director himself, who muses about European composers.

In addition to centering neither around popular personalities nor conforming to standard histories, the essay film deliberately segues between separate styles, tone, and/or modes of address. The essay film utilizes the available technological and stylistic resources in its attempt to render theoretical ideas visible on the screen. As a result, a single shot in an essay film may be a composition consisting of a visual frame, superimposed text and graphs, editorial, voiceover narration, a musical score, and factual intertitles, for example. Or, some essay films, such as a number made by Harun Farocki for example, may eliminate foregrounded narration entirely. The intended effect is to push against epistemological unities of time and place to ultimately interrogate existing economic, political, and social conditions.

One of the earlier examples of an essay film that intentionally shifts between separate styles and modes of address is a French production that focuses on a German artist. Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's *Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's "Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene"* (1972) is a dense, austere 16-minute work that blends cultural politics with formal rigor. At the time, Straub and Huillet used a TV contract meant to make a standard artist's biography to transform Schoenberg's 1930 musical composition for an unproduced film into a "dialectical argument on artistic responsibility and capitalist barbarism" (Arthur 61). *Introduction* contains the directors' personal reactions to the triumph of fascism that accompany Schoenberg's music in visual and spoken form. Halfway through the film Huillet reads a scathing letter from Schoenberg to Kandinsky in which the composer rejects the painter's invitation to join the Bauhaus to avoid increasing persecution of Jews. Straub and Huillet then

follow Schoenberg's letter with a "materialist text by Brecht dissecting the role of capitalism in support of fascist aggression" (60-1). The film then abruptly cuts to library footage of a bombing mission in Southeast Asia. At the end, we see shots of a recent newspaper article that reveals the acquittal of Nazi architects tried for complicity in mass murder. As Arthur continues to argue, *Introduction* covers quite a bit of ground. Straub and Huillet used an original musical composition, personal reactions on camera, a letter from Schoenberg to Kandinsky, an excerpt from Brecht's materialist texts, archival library footage, and a newspaper article to construct a "biting essayistic voice cobbled together entirely by quotation" (61). Although the directors used the work of a well-known artist, namely Schoenberg, to propel the essay film through each segment and mode of representation, the ultimate focus was neither Arnold Schoenberg's biography nor the twelve-tone method. Instead, *Introduction* uses both to join creative activity with political concerns at the time of filming, which Straub and Huillet expressed by reaching to several different modes of aesthetic expression.

Third, authorial presence is central in an essay film. This is not to say that other cinematic approaches do not convey a directorial influence. If we think back to the previous chapter and the discussion of the documentary, we may recall that even a film form confronted with conveying the "truth" is still a creative representation of perceptible reality. The moment in which the director or cinematographer edits, or even when a documentary begins and ends, is the result of a subjective decision-making process. Because there is the expectation, or rather, awareness that a documentary ought to convey to the audience what occurred at a particular time and place, we trust that the documentary communicates a fair representation of a specific experience. Angela Melitopoulos' 1999 video essay *Passing Drama*, for example, is a complex audio-visual arrangement of multi-lingual voice-over narrations, sound effects, and videographic

animation. *Passing Drama* engages with a history that encompasses two generations of Kurdish Greeks who were repeatedly forced to flee from political oppression and persecution. Using personal interviews, Melitopoulos intercuts specific recollections as told by members of the families and juxtaposes them with audio-visual footage of her own family's history (*documenta 14* catalogue). Consequently, in a couple of instances throughout the essay film, *Passing Drama* offers a recollection of an event, but the accompanying images present a contrasting possibility. The conjunction of language and image, therefore, proves to be a significant component in authorial presence. As Arthur emphasizes, a series of familiar, yet stylistically diverse elements coincide to "subvert documentary's privileged, transparent aura of control" (Arthur 59). The essay film once again diverges from the traditional documentary film forms in the sense that it "hold[s] up for scrutiny those conventions that other documentary genres suppress...fuel[ing] meta-critical speculation on nonfiction cinema's blind spots" (Arthur 60). Where the documentary approach may fall short, the essay film picks up and interrogates further.

This brings us to the fourth element that characterizes an essay film, namely that it dynamically challenges enduring perspectives. A converging angle of inquiry disputes that which we initially perceived at truth value, which newly interprets extant images, and ultimately questions cultural contexts. This is crucial, for it reaffirms that the way an issue or an idea is communicated could have taken an entirely different route, that it is one of several possible versions of the same concept. An example of an essay film that reflects this is Želimir Žilnik's 2000 work *Fortress Europe*, shot on location in the southeastern bordering region within the Schengen zone, specifically between Hungary and Slovenia as well as between Croatia and Hungary. The film focuses on members of a Russian family who find themselves in a foreign country without documents that would make the rest of their planned journey to the West legal.

However, instead of portraying these areas as dangerous and threatening environments for the family, Žilnik depicts the spaces as just another geographic territory through which documented and undocumented travel occurs daily. In *Fortress Europe*, Žilnik argues that the Balkans are a self-contained discursive and political space that serves as a bridge to Europe for “non-European” and “other Eastern European immigrants” (Kovačević 189-190), which ultimately parallels the experiences of other “globally disenfranchised multitudes” (191).

Ursula Biemann’s first major work, *Performing the Border* (1999), employs the four main characteristics of the essay film. Although Biemann describes the work as not one of her “most ambitious projects” (Biemann, “Writing Videos” 2), *Performing the Border* evades standard historical approaches by looking at the border as both a discursive and as a material space of migration and globalization processes constituted through the performance and management of gender relations. The 43-minute video essay is set in the Mexican-US border town Ciudad Juárez, where several US industries assemble their electronic and digital equipment. In addition to the economically inspired component, *Performing the Border* highlights the female citizens of Ciudad Juárez because it focuses on the hundreds of gruesome serial killings of women that have occurred over the past twenty years. Biemann envelopes the topic of the murders with the outsourced production processes which draws a connection between eroticized violence and mass technologies as part of information society.

Performing the Border does not tell a coherent historical or personal story but rather visits four critical manifestations of what Biemann encourages us to conceptualize as the “border effect:” the makeshift colonias where people erect living spaces out of repurposed and recycled materials, the maquiladoras (or maquilas) where many colonia residents are employed, the topographies of sex work, and finally, the Ciudad Juárez femicides, or homicides against women.

To portray this onscreen, the film essay combines interviews, scripted voice over by Biemann, quoted text on the screen, scenes and sounds recorded on site, as well as found footage. The video consequently moves between a “disembodied, authoritative foreign narrator” and the “embodied, Spanish-speaking interview subjects,” shedding light on “the political desires of feminist representational practices” as well as on the processes of identification that feminist documentary has tended to either invite or resist (Warner 119-120). *Performing the Border*’s dissonance and distance between the filmmaker’s voice-over and filmed interviews (Rosa 179-181) resonates with the authority, distance, and intelligence of key essay films, such as Alain Resnais’ *Nuit et brouillard* (1955) and Chris Marker’s *Sans soleil* (1983).

As reflected in the deciding characteristic of the essay film, namely the challenge of enduring perspectives, Biemann’s goal was to portray the lived experience of the local women and bind these together with discourses focusing on globalization processes and gender relations. However, Biemann drew criticism for her ambitious undertaking and for the way she chose to systematically portray the information. One overview suggests that on the one hand, *Performing the Border* attempts to resist “neo colonial representation practices” by foreclosing identification and challenging dominant documentary conventions. On the other hand, the same critique insists that Biemann’s film essay also subtly reproduces colonial power schemas by using the voices of the interviewees for its own abstract metanarrative (“Rites of Passage” roundtable 64-5, Warner 125-8). The bodies and voices of the portrayed and/or mentioned Mexican women reflect the “capitalist processes of deindividuation and disassembly, which continue to cost these women their lives” (Warner 125). It is true that the social actors in *Performing the Border* have experiences, just as Biemann herself has ideas, thoughts, and the power of analysis. It is also true that Biemann shows how the women are reduced to the excess and expendability their daily

routine brings. However, what is identified as “anti-realist techniques” and “the refusal of cinematic identification” (128) requires more than the sweeping finality of the suggested replication of capitalist processes and consequences. In other words, how is one to portray a highly sensitive and complex subject such as the intertwining of femicide and outsourced mass technologies? The essay film continuously encompasses the available stylistic and technological modes, registers, and approaches cinema offers. As explicated in the previous section, the very creation of a film presumes an authorial presence, which in turn does not refute any subjectivity that may be brought into the work. Biemann does speak subjectively as a Swiss artist, tourist, and witness who also seeks new modes of understanding and ways of engaging with the border. In the case of *Performing the Border*, Biemann’s insistence on maintaining distance between the filmmaker, the viewer, and the speaking women may fail to generate political affinity between the involved. However, it may be more productive to closely analyze, shot by shot, how this occurs in order to offer a nuanced interpretation of the effect produced when a “disembodied” voice-over speaks in an alternative register beyond the reality of the experiencing body. What type of a critical terrain does this film essay generate? Does it merely replicate the standard “capitalist processes” or does it reveal the viewer’s own predetermined perspectives on the subject?

Such inquiries lie at the intersection of social history, interdisciplinary discourse, and personal, subjective reflection, all of which coincide in the essay film. Like its literary stimulus, the essay film holds the capacity for continuous intellectual and artistic innovation. Its primary characteristics, namely the lack of popular figures and standard histories, the deliberate segues between separate styles, tone, and/or modes of address, authorial presence, and defiance of enduring perspectives, converge to form a complex terrain of both thought and representation.

Whether one perceives it as a genre or a mode, the essay film therefore offers a range of politically charged visions. These perspectives (that challenge an adopted or accepted sociopolitical perspective, for example), “uniquely...blend abstract ideas with concrete realities, the general case with specific notations of human experience” (Arthur 58). The very history of the essay film stresses transgression and self-reflection, which at times causes it to be informal, skeptical, and at times contradictory and disjunctive. The essay film carries an arduous responsibility, however, namely that it attempts to debate a problem or an established perspective by using all the means, registers, and expedients that cinema affords. It entails detailed preparatory work and elaborate processes of creating a shot that ultimately has as its outcome “one image” on the chosen subject(s). An essay film may simultaneously employ several elements, such as voice-over, digital enhancing, superimposed images, and text, for example, to construct a perceivably uniform and distinct commentary. Although the essay film may reveal the personal position and/or intervention of its author on a topic, this may be used to an analytical advantage. As one of the main premises for a film essay is to continuously challenge a specific stance or imbedded socio-political construct, the filmmaker’s perspective is also up for interrogation. In fact, engaging with a film essay while incorporating the filmmaker’s motivations or possible reasons behind her/his chosen montage supports the experimentation and idiosyncrasy intrinsic to the form that strives to produce yet another perception on an extant issue. As Theodor Adorno explicates in his *Notes to Literature*, “in the essay, concepts do not build a continuum of operation, thought does not advance in a single direction, rather the aspects of the argument interweave as in a carpet” (Adorno, *Notes to Literature* 23, 160). Pointedly stated, “the essay aims, in other words, *to preserve something in the process of thinking*” (Good

20, my emphasis). The essay film ultimately establishes what we can describe as “knowledgescapes,” not a linear argument but a terrain of thought.

4.2.2 Thinking, mapped – or on knowledgescapes

There is a crucial link between the responsibility of the essay film and the concept of “knowledgescapes.” The essay film ought to render on screen invisible theoretical processes that challenge enduring perspectives, and to preserve something in this process of thinking. As Richter argued in his exposition, to make visible the imperceptible world of imaginations, thoughts, and ideas, the essay film may neither be bound to the representation of external ideas nor to a chronological sequence. Instead, the essay film ought to pull together “material for view from everywhere and for this reason...one may jump throughout space and time...as long as it serves as an argument for the visualization of an idea” (Richter 197). The idea of knowledgescapes characterizes the cognitive spaces humans navigate as they pursue and are pursued by knowledge. The phrase “cognitive knowledgescapes” therefore surveys the processes underlying knowledge transfer between human beings to understand how knowledge is transferred. As the knowledge transfer process is ultimately a human-to-human process, it is interactive and dynamic, often causing the knowledge to change during the very process of its transfer.

The essay film creatively renders the transfer of knowledge. Its characteristics, namely the lack of popular figures and standard histories, the deliberate segues between separate styles, tone, and/or modes of address, authorial presence, and defiance of enduring perspectives, are in place to map the interactive and dynamic knowledge transfer process between the artist and the aesthetic product, as well as between the aesthetic product and the observer. Preserving

something in the process of thinking, as is the responsibility of the essay film, requires focus on the way this process is executed, as observable through knowledgescapes, which in turn necessitates a range of means, registers, and expedients for the visualization of an idea.

Although reserved mainly for cognitive science, it is also important to note that the expression “knowledgescapes” is an interdisciplinary term that originated in social-cultural anthropology. The term “knowledgescapes” first appeared in a 1999 article titled “How does knowledge transform as it is transferred? Speculations on the possibility of a cognitive theory of knowledgescapes.” Its author, Syed Shariq, credits Arjun Appadurai and his 1996 work *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* for helping Shariq coin the term “knowledgescapes” in the discourse of cognitive science.

In *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai focuses on the cultural dimension of globalization by exploring how the relationships between migration and modern mass media affect our perception and definition of nation and nationhood. Appadurai argues that it has been only since the mid-1970s that media and migration have begun to “deterritorialize,” which has led to the emergence of long-distance nationalism, what he terms as the “diasporic public sphere,” ethnic violence, and the growing disjunction of cultural, economic, and political aspects of daily life (Appadurai 44, 53, 66, and 139). While globalization is not a new process as modern capitalism has always been a global system (Appadurai 45, Scott and Swenson 9), Appadurai provides a cultural perspective on the impact and political possibilities of globalization. According to Appadurai, for the last twenty years we have experienced a drastic rupture in our pattern of social relations. To further explore such disjunctures, Appadurai proposes an elementary framework that conceptualizes the global from the perspective of the local by focusing on how popular imagination is transformed within the context of a globally embedded everyday life. Appadurai’s theorizes this approach by

applying the suffix “-scapes” to generate terms such as "ethnoscapes", "mediascapes", “technoscapes,” “financescapes” and "ideoscapes," all of which constitute what Appadurai calls the “imagined world,” that is, “the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe” (Appadurai 33-4).

The suffix “-scape,” Appadurai argues, allows us to point to the “fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles” (Appadurai 33). By “technoscape,” for example, Appadurai refers to how both mechanical and international technology now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries, ultimately attaining a global configuration on its own (34). “Mediascapes” denote both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (such as newspapers, TV stations, and, to add to it, the internet) and to the images of the world created by these media. These images may involve, but are not limited to, documentary and entertainment modes that originate in the popular, political, and social sectors of production. “Ideascapes” are also “concatenations of images,” (36-7), but they are predominantly political as they frequently engage with the ideologies of states and counter-ideologies of movements. The result of both mediascapes and ideascapes, according to Appadurai, are appropriated elements of the Enlightenment worldview, which consists of a chain of ideas, terms, and images, including “freedom,” “welfare,” “rights,” “sovereignty,” “representation,” and the master term, “democracy.” Appadurai briefly recalls how the master narrative of the Enlightenment (and its variants in Britain, France, and in the United States) was constructed with a certain internal logic and presupposed a particular relationship between reading, representation, and the public sphere. Appadurai contends that since the nineteenth century (and here we may remember the beginning of the formation of nation-states), these terms

and images have become “a loosely structured synopticon of politics” in which different nation-states, as part of their own evolution, “have organized their political cultures around different keywords” (36, 38).

Shariq proposes the phrase “cognitive knowledgescapes” as an extension of Appadurai's use of “-scapes” to express the cognitive spaces we humans navigate as we pursue and are pursued by knowledge (Shariq 3). Knowledgescapes contain three salient characteristics, namely temporality, absorption, and value (Shariq 243). Shariq maintains that the understanding of the temporality, absorption and value of knowledge is essential to the development of effective explanations for the choices and behavior of individuals, organizations and institutions.

Temporality suggests that knowledge transfer involves a dynamic of pace and acceleration. Knowledge transfers occur at various speeds and involve unpredictable quantities at any given point in time. We may connect this notion of temporality to the essay film's lack of traditional narratives and usage of technologically advanced styles. The second element of knowledgescapes, absorption, refers to the internal cognition the recipient in knowledge transfer must possess to interpret the knowledge s/he is receiving. Examples of absorption include transfers between researchers and practitioners, between marketing and product design, between filmmakers, theater actors and their respective audiences, as well as between writers and readers, for example. We may connect the element of absorption to the essay film's recognition of various knowledge registers aside from widely accepted perspectives. We may also think to the experience of an essay film in that absorption of knowledge (transfer) occurs between the material and/or social actors and the filmmaker, as well as between the film and the viewer. Finally, the third characteristic in the knowledge transfer process as part of Shariq's concept of cognitive knowledgescapes is the value of knowledge. Shariq explains how knowledge that

requires tacit discussions, such as exchanges involving artists, experts in certain fields, performers, and physicians, for example, is unique and often difficult to commodify, thereby rendering it of higher value (247-8). Here we may think of the value of knowledge, as part of cognitive knowledgescapes, as an extension (or even as a result) of the essay film's challenge to enduring perspectives.

As knowledgescapes closely examine the cognitive spaces humans navigate while pursuing and being pursued by knowledge (through elements of temporality, absorption, and value of knowledge), and the essay film creatively renders the transfer of knowledge, we may conclude that knowledgescapes aid in the focus of preserving something in the process of thinking. Ursula Biemann's *Remote Sensing* (2001) and *Europlex* (2003), two essay films that continued the questions raised in and through *Performing the Border* (1999), map, and in certain moments, further develop the concept of knowledgescapes.

While *Remote Sensing* directly engages in global migration flows of women sex workers, *Europlex* follows several female domestic workers who continually cross a national border for work. Throughout both films, Biemann illustrates her take on the element of temporality, that is, the notion that knowledge transfers occur at various speeds and involve unpredictable quantities at any given point in time. *Remote Sensing* and *Europlex* consistently employ split screens onto which Biemann superimposed three additional sources of information: travel manifests of individual sex workers, satellite images of the locations in which they reside and move, and statistics on both the social actors (such as personal information) as well as on standard sociological profiles on sex workers world-wide. The three types of information are included in the simultaneous split screens, which in turn forms a collage in a single frame that the viewer observes as the films progress. In other words, *Remote Sensing* temporally compresses a great

amount of complex information that was the result of a two-year research endeavor, and renders it through a variety of visual registers. *Remote Sensing* also boosts the absorption aspect of knowledgescapes in the essay film's voiceover narration and in Biemann's own analysis. If we recall, absorption in this sense is the internal cognition the recipient in the knowledge transfer must possess to interpret the knowledge being received. Since the 1990s, as Biemann shares during the beginning of the essay film and in her own writing on the work, there has been a great number of displaced women from Manila to Nigeria, from Burma to Thailand, from Bulgaria to Europe, all for the purposes of sex trafficking (Biemann, "Remote Sensing" 39-40, *Remote Sensing*). This type of information Biemann shares with the viewer is specific to her perspective of the topic, however, it covers a wide range of registers. In her desire to trace the "topographies" of the global sex trade, Biemann accompanies the visually depicted collages of satellite media and other geographic information technologies with short narrative statements that provide further background on what the social actors on screen are experiencing. Ultimately depicting the "female body in the flow of global capitalism," Biemann's *Remote Sensing* communicates a great amount of research and experiential information in such a way so that the viewer may grow her/his internal cognition and perspective on the subject in a brief amount of time.

Europlex (2003) is a 20-minute film essay filmed on the Spanish-Moroccan borderlands and created in collaboration with visual anthropologist Angela Sanders. Biemann considers this one of her more successful early film essays that employs various registers and stylistic devices to render a meticulous perspective of its subject matter. *Europlex* examines, in a series of border recordings, the circular movement of people around the checkpoint between the Spanish enclave Ceuta, a city, and the surrounding Moroccan territory. As Biemann observes, the people who

cross the border do not wish to enter the city of Ceuta. Instead, the aim of the border crossing is to pursue “semi-legal business” in the expanded border complex (Biemann, “Europlex” 47).

Biemann demonstrates the element of temporality, namely the notion that knowledge transfers occur at various speeds and involve unpredictable quantities at any given point in time, in three “border logs.” Biemann uses the term “log” in *Europlex* to refer to a series of related occurrences she recorded at the checkpoint between Ceuta and the surrounding Moroccan territory. In her own writing, she also emphasizes that the term “log” is also to refer to travel logs and ethnographic recordings. In video editing, the log, or the chronological list of filmed materials, is considered an indispensable preparation for the editing process (Biemann, “Writing Video” 5).

“Border Log I” observes the extensive smuggling activities that occur at the border to Ceuta. Because filming is strictly prohibited, Biemann recorded under constant interruption, with a hidden camera or from a distance. Border Log I begins at 6 a.m., when the gates open to a large crowd, which continues to pass throughout the day. Smuggling takes place in the daylight in front of the eyes of the officials. Wholesale warehouses and street markets are just around the corner from the checkpoint. Here smugglers rummage around for good deals and buy as much as they can carry, including wool blankets that they resell in Tétuan. To achieve the best possible mobility for crossing, the female smugglers strap shirts and cloths to their bodies, layer by layer, until they have doubled their body volume. On their way back they pass, this time heavily (and quite visibly) loaded, in front of the same officials, who are compensated for turning a blind eye. According to Biemann, this event occurs up to eleven times a day, during which the individuals “inhabit the border in a non-linear, circular way, carving out an existence for themselves.” The

goods they bring back display an “economic logic [which] inscribes itself onto every layer of the transforming, mobile, female body” (*Europlex*).

“Border Log II” follows the daily journey of several Moroccan maids who live in the Moroccan town Tétuan and work in the enclave. However, instead of focusing on the difficult conditions young Moroccan women face when they enter the European labor market, Biemann looks at what happens when the social actors commute between Moroccan and the European time zones. Because the two adjacent territories are located in distinct time zones with a two-hour time lapse, the domestic worker turns into a “permanent time traveler within the border economy” (Biemann, *Europlex* 48). Biemann presents the alternating delay and acceleration with respect to time and movement by staging one of the maids in front of a pop background. By way of editing, we see the woman repetitively smile and gesture in a jerking motion. She is interrupted by drop-outs, that is, by missing images which stop and restart in a choppy fashion.

“Border Log III” enters the territory near Tangier where Moroccan women manufacture products for European subcontractors. The border crossed by these women on a daily basis is a lot less visible than the fortified one around Ceuta that the smugglers and domestic workers pass through. To render this cinematically, Biemann used a brusque freeze in the images which caused the worker’s face and gaze to remain sharp while the background dissolves gradually into graininess until it is beyond recognition. Electronic rhythms accompany this sequence, which is additionally overlaid by quickly accumulating figures suggesting labor hours and performance statistics.

Both *Remote Sensing* and *Europlex* communicate a dense, revolving collage of images and disparate testimonies, couched in a graphic and unsparing critique of globalized female enslavement. Biemann comments on the ways in which West European countries have

intersected with this reconfigured global network of labor, focusing on the especially precarious status that women workers have within this underpaid and transmigratory workforce. Both films critique female body trafficking by chronicling the predominant global routes along which it is conducted. Women sex workers and assembly-line workers are given their own voices through interview segments that are presented on the same plane as interviews with women activists and political scientists. The indeterminacy Biemann creates necessitates as its outcome a sustained analytical viewer engagement and presents the magnitude of the social problem of women's bonded labour through a wide geographic range of countries visited (Druxes 500).

Biemann visually juxtaposes the social actors' desire for "migratory self-determination" (*Europlex*) with the various mechanisms and systems that aim to contain and discipline mobility.

Biemann's discursivity in her works converges with the views of some prominent critics of globalization, such as the political theorist Seyla Benhabib. In her 2004 work *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens*, Benhabib argues that a situation of "permanent alienage" arises, which prevents full political agency for migratory workers (Benhabib 146). Benhabib defines alienage as "the creation of a group in society that partakes of property rights and civil society without having access to political rights" (146). She advocates a more radical cosmopolitan pluralism that would acknowledge moral responsibility for the way actions in the West "have a substantial impact on the lives of others to whom we may not be even remotely related" (104). Benhabib further emphasizes moral cosmopolitanism motivated by humanitarian consideration and calls for the right to active political participation in existing institutions (Benhabib 95).

Biemann engages with her topics by way of the film essay which through its relentless and simultaneous variety of styles, tones, and modes of address maps the knowledgescapes, that

is, terrains of thought, on the subject in question. She does not offer a resolution or an alternate approach to the issues she explores. However, because her essay films are a composite of a multitude of styles and registers, they creatively render the transfer of knowledge, which puts the focus back on *how* an event or a piece of information is communicated on-screen.

4.2.3 Thinking, in “stories-so-far” – or on critical geographies

In addition to deploying genre strategies of the essay film, developing the cultural anthropologically inspired concept of knowledgescapes, Biemann engages with central matters in critical geography. Henri Lefebvre’s concept of space as a social construct, Doreen Massey’s extrapolations thereof in the form of places as spatio-temporal events, and her notion of power geometry are of interest when discussing Ursula Biemann’s film essays.

Although diverse in its epistemology, ontology, and methodology, “and hence lacking a distinctive theoretical identity,” (Hubbard, Kitchin, and Valentine 345), critical geography brings together scholars working with different approaches (such as Marxist, feminist, postcolonial, and poststructural, for example) in their shared commitment to expose the “socio-spatial processes that (re)produce inequalities between people and places” (345). In other words, critical geographers are united by an ideological stance. They reflect their interest in studying and changing the social, cultural, economic, or political relations that create unjust and exploitative geographies through questions of moral philosophy, social and environmental justice, as well as through attempts to bridge what they see as a substantial divide between research and praxis. Notable critical geographers include David Harvey, Gearóid Ó Tuathail, David Sibley, and Iris Marion Young, among others.

In his landmark book *The Production of Space* (originally published in 1974 and translated into English in 1991), Lefebvre lays the groundwork for principal concepts in critical geography. He traces the transformation of space under capitalism and in doing so, theorizes space itself as a product of social relations and processes. One of Lefebvre's notable collaborations that influenced his theoretical approach in the work was with the Situationniste International (SI) group led by Guy Debord. It was crucial in directing Lefebvre's attention to urban environments as the contexts of everyday life and the expression of social relations of production (Shields 209). This, in turn, influenced Lefebvre's understandings of geographical space, landscape, and property as being cultural and thereby carrying a history of change (210). In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre particularly engaged with the struggle over the meaning of space and considered how relations across territories were given cultural meaning. By recognizing spatial patterns of social action and embodied routine, Lefebvre outlined a progression of conceptions of space as practiced over the course of history.

The result is the concept of space as a dynamic. Lefebvre argues that "absolute, untouched space" cannot exist because it is "located nowhere" (Lefebvre 236). Conceptually we begin with "abstract" space, and the instant it is subject to any type of social activity, abstract space becomes "relativized" and/or "historicized" space (253). Lefebvre refers to the "relativized" and/or "historicized" space as simply "space" and ultimately as "(social) space" throughout his work. As Lefebvre summarized, "([s]ocial) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre 25-6). The particularity about (social) space is that it is indistinguishable both from "mental space (as defined by philosophers and mathematicians)" and from "and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of "nature")" (27). (Social) space is constituted neither by a collection of things nor by an aggregate of data. It is, according to

Lefebvre, irreducible to a “form” imposed “upon phenomena, upon things, upon physical materiality” (27, 29-30).

At this moment, we may argue that a continuously evolving activity takes on a recognizable form due to its repetitive nature, that is, due to it always being dynamic. The lack of divide from “mental” and “physical” space in Lefebvre’s description of (social) space is perceptible, but the irreducibility to a form may prove problematic. Human cognition needs a recognizable element to be able to argue for or against it. Nevertheless, although portions of Lefebvre’s conceptual arguments may seem tautological, his concept of (social) space and the characteristic of (social) space being dynamic are productive engagements that set the necessary preconditions for critical geography. “Produced space” or “(social) space” serves as a tool of thought and of action. In addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power (Lefebvre 26, Myers-Szupinska 23). However, as space is also a product, it may escape in part from those who intend to make use of it. As Lefebvre points out, the social and political (state) forces which engendered this (social) space “now seek, but fail, to master it completely; the very agency that has forced spatial reality towards a sort of uncontrollable autonomy now strives to run it into the ground, then shackle and enslave it” (Lefebvre 30).

Influenced by Marxist political economy and Henri Lefebvre’s renewed conceptualization of space as a product, social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey focused Lefebvre’s work which ultimately helped integrate his *The Production of Space* as one of the seminal discourses of critical geography. Among Massey’s own leading contributions to critical geography are the 1994 work *Space, Place, and Gender* and the reconceptualization of these themes in her 2005 book *For Space*. While *Space, Place, and Gender* grounds Lefebvre’s

theoretical language by conceptualizing the “social” and the “spatial” together, *For Space* argues for a reinvigoration of spatiality in which Massey argues that places are neither points nor areas on maps. Instead, they are “integrations of space and time,” that is, places are “spatio-temporal events” (Massey, *For Space* 130).

Three characteristics define a spatio-temporal event (or, Massey’s concept of “place”). One, it is the product of interrelations as constituted through interactions, “from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny” (Massey, *For Space* 130-1). Two, a place/spatio-temporal event is a sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist, a “sphere of coexisting heterogeneity” (131). Massey is especially emphatic here for she argues that if space is the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon plurality. In other words, multiplicity and space are co-constitutive. Without space, there is no multiplicity; without multiplicity, there is no space. Three, a place/spatio-temporal event is always under construction. Massey claims that because it is a product of “relations-between,” that is, relations which may be embedded and material practices which must be carried out, it is “always in the process of being made” (132).

Here we may also note Massey’s strong critique on the strict divide between space and time, in which stasis is associated with the spatial, and change is connected to the temporal. Viewing this as highly problematic, Massey counters that space and time are inseparable as the spatial component is integral to the production of history, and thus to the possibility of politics, just as the temporal element is essential to geography (Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* 164-7, 269). A spatio-temporal event/a place, according to Massey, is thus never finished and never closed. Places may be understood as “porous networks of social relations” (Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* 121). Echoing Theodor Adorno’s explication on the essay (Adorno, *Notes to Literature* 23, 160) and one of the fundamental characteristics of the essay film (Good 20),

Massey writes that “a place is woven together out of ongoing stories...as a moment within power geometries and...as a particular constellation within the wider topographies of space (Massey, *For Space* 131). Massey summarizes: “Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (132-3).

In addition to conceptualizing places as spatio-temporal events, Massey introduced the concept of “power-geometry” to emphasize how groups and individuals are differently positioned within the porous networks in space. Power-geometries further the conceptualization of space as always under construction (Massey, “Concepts of Space and Power” 22) by focusing on the ways in which spatiality and mobility are both shaped by and reproduce power differentials in society. Examples of these power differentials include the control over distribution of goods and services, or the different circuits enabled by transportation systems (Massey, *For Space* 131). Power geometry, or “differential power migration,” interrogates existing structures of rest and motion through Massey’s concepts of “mobility” and “porousness” (Massey, *For Space* 84).

Here we may note that power-geometry aims to be general as it does not provide a cohesive conceptual framework. One possible reason is that in order to be coterminous with an ever-changing society, or with the human species in general, power-geometry does not take on a specific form, a specific geometry, that is (Saldanha 44). Instead, it is a concept “through which to analyze the world, in order perhaps to highlight inequalities, or deficiencies in democracy” (Massey, “Concepts of Space and Power” 19). Power-geometry is an instrument of critique, and with that, it exposes the parameters that make up Massey’s notion of the spatio-temporal.

We may examine Henri Lefebvre’s concept of space as a social construct, Doreen Massey’s extrapolations thereof in the form of places as spatio-temporal events, and her notion

of power-geometry in Ursula Biemann's *Black Sea Files* (2005). A 43-minute two-channel video installation, *Black Sea Files* features territorial research on the Caspian "oil geography," the world's oldest oil extraction zone. Biemann constructed the film essay in a series of ten segments, or "visual files," to which she refers as her "visual intelligence." Within the arrangement of the ten segments, *Black Sea Files* traces the construction of a subterranean pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC pipeline), designed to pump crude oil from the Caspian Sea to a terminal at Ceyhan on the Turkish coast. Built between 2003 and 2006 and traversing just over 1,700 kilometers, the BTC pipeline is one of the longest in the world and crosses Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey (Brown 53).

Biemann depicts the territories in *Black Sea Files* as both spatio-temporal events and as continuous developments resulting out of power geometries. The opening narration explicitly states that power resides "in the possession of vital resources or the power to procure them" (Biemann, *Black Sea Files*). The subsequent four visual files confirm this. They first identify the transportation of oil as the primary source of power. Then, field records that are superimposed within the filmic frame depict the struggle of affected individuals and communities along the pipeline route. Biemann especially focuses on how the social actors fight to locate other resources for their own purposes of survival, which all ultimately have a connection to the construction and trajectory of the pipeline. The concept of historicized space as a product of power relations continues in the second half of *Black Sea Files*. Biemann first continues to follow the emerging "construction corridor" that cuts through the landscape and the accompanied engineering labor undertaken regarding construction of the pipeline. These scenes depict both the tangible reconstruction and redefinition of space, complete with the individuals who are positioned to execute such changes. The attention then shifts from a "real-time"

construction of the BTC pipeline to individual experiences of workers, farmers, refugees, migrants, and sex workers who are displaced by the construction operations.

Continuing her thematic concerns from *Remote Sensing*, Biemann subsequently investigates the ways in which the creation of the pipeline reinforces pre-existing structures of gender inequality. “File 6” of *Black Sea Files*, for example, depicts this and identifies the primary catalyst as the tangible, territorial intervention built across three different countries. The left side, or channel, takes place in a hotel bedroom in Trabzon near the Turkish Black Sea. It records a conversation between Biemann, two female sex workers (Jula and Nara), and two pimps. While Biemann attempts to ask Jula and Nara about their background and about how they came to Trabzon, the two women are visibly uncomfortable in front of the camera and are unwilling to speak openly. While the camera remains static throughout the interview and is trained solely on the two women, the right channel/side shows a stream of images of industrial transit along international highways. At the end of the interview, the following text appears: “The end of the Soviet era had an impact on female mobility and marketability. Even in oil rich Azerbaijan, women must look for opportunities abroad. They move west-bound, using the same route as the oil” (*Black Sea Files*). The conceptual terrain, the knowledgescape Biemann forms in this essay film implicitly links sex work to the transnational route of the oil pipeline. The sharing of a common geography creates a link, therefore, between the mining and transport of natural resources and the women’s use of their own bodies as a resource for financial survival (Brown 57). The (inter)national establishments responsible for supporting the construction, and with that, the new spatiality and triggered mobility as causes of the pipeline, produce a power differential between several groups of individuals, including between local and state authorities,

between men and women, between the pipeline workers and residents searching for employment, among others.

Extrapolating from Biemann's thematic focus of gender inequality in "File 6," we may also observe that *Black Sea Files* demonstrates a comprehensive network of power relations. The essay film inquires not only on how the pipeline construction relates to local laws and human rights conventions, but how informal local structures impact the number and diversity of voices that are heard within this controlled space. One such identifying characteristic is the fact that the BTC pipeline was designed to be subterranean and hence ultimately invisible to passers-by. However, Biemann's ten segments of "visual intelligence" suggest that those who inhabit the space surround the construction area risk a similar concealment, as their interests and struggles pass unnoticed by those who focus on the broader economic and geopolitical significance of the project. This interplay between the visibility and invisibility of personal histories within liminal, transnational spaces plays directly into Massey's notion of power-geometry. Furthermore, those in the direct path of the pipeline are positioned in distinctive power differentials. A cross-border infrastructure project such as this initiates several issues regarding, for example, the compulsory acquisition of land, the environmental impact of construction, and the extent to which adequate communication channels are opened for local representation and complaints about the planning and execution of the works. In fact, several legal studies analyze the impact of the BTC project on residents in the affected countries and the issues they faced in pursuing legal remedies for non-payment of funds for the compulsory acquisition of their land and for alleged violations of the European Convention on Human Rights, for example (Dufey and Kazimova). In addition to this, conflicts arose between local laws and European human rights legislation, to the point where the United Kingdom issued a

statement concerning the consortium's failure to comply with guidelines issued by the by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Department for Business, Innovations and Skills 2011).

Like Kara Walker and Vik Muniz, Ursula Biemann borrows heavily from unpopular conventions of display and visual registration in her curatorial practice as well as in her video essay series. She describes part of her work as a “decisive attempt to insert myself into the range of investigative practices performed in these different spheres of knowledge,” such as geology, journalism, and anthropology (Biemann, *Black Sea Files* 64). Biemann consciously weaves documentary imagery, recorded and constructed sound, personal interviews, experimental film editing, and current military and corporate surveillance tools to generate the visual subjectivities that are the very fabric of her video essays, curatorial projects, and exhibits. Her videos trace the routes of capital, natural resources, and information flows across national borders, which in turn direct the transnational flow of human bodies laboring in different geopolitical locations (Musiol, “Museums” 166-7). The social actors respond to their circumstances in creative, ad-hoc ways to usurp some “benefits of legal personhood” (Musiol, “Museums” 168). Ultimately, Biemann does not only include, but she also brings *attention to* individuals who inhabit Massey's concept of power geometry. The zones of juridical “exception” and “emergency,” transnational borderlands, outsourced factories, illegal sex-labor markets, and refugee camps in *Black Sea Files* are the Lefebvrian social products of Massey's power differentials within the porous networks in space.

To some, Biemann's approaches may not seem radical – after all, ethnographers, anthropologists, and sociologists routinely use “field work” and interdisciplinary commentary to conduct their research. However, as she is happy with her role neither as “producer” nor as

“cultural mediator” (Musiol, “Transnational Labor” 19), Biemann defines herself as an artist who uses discursive approaches in her work. *Performing the Border* (1999), *Remote Sensing* (2001), *Europlex* (2003), and *Black Sea Files* (2005) are thus complex aesthetic products that necessitate the simultaneous consideration of multiple discursive methods. Biemann’s deployment of genre strategies of the essay film, her development of the cultural-anthropologically inspired concept of “knowledgescapes,” and her representation of discourses in critical geography form powerful narrative tools that allow us to revise abstract theories. The essay film, knowledgescapes, and critical geography share four main theoretical elements. They are: an understanding of dynamic temporality, a creative representation of knowledge transfer, an understanding of space as a socio-cultural process, and an awareness of power trajectories in all three, that is, in time, space, and the creative representation of knowledge transfer. These four elements are not mutually exclusive, and, similarly to Hans-Thies Lehmann’s components making up postdramatic theater, they overlap and are best conceived as constantly interacting with one another.

4.3 THE REFUGEE AS A BEGINNING

4.3.1 *Contained Mobility* (2004)

Commissioned by the Liverpool Biennale (Biemann, “Contained Mobility” 57, Staiger 145), *Contained Mobility* is a 21-minute synchronized double video from 2004 that shares visual and textual information on Anatol Kuis-Zimmerman, whom Biemann identifies as an asylum seeker according to the information she obtained. According to Biemann, the information in *Contained Mobility* is based on several hours of interviews with Anatol in his “forever-temporary location”

in Liverpool (Biemann 59). Biemann writes that she composed his complicated itinerant biography “with the greatest possible accuracy.” At the same time, Anatol allegedly assured her that after being processed by a dozen European countries or more, Biemann was the first person to produce a complete testimony of his cross-border movements and experiences. Biemann defines this information as the “missing record required for access to the human right of asylum.”

Contained Mobility employs a simultaneous split-screen format for its entire duration. The left screen shows images of unidentified bodies of water, digital navigation coordinates, and container traffic information systems (Biemann 57). It is a dispassionate “if omnipresent data production indicated visually through charts and graphs, navigation simulators, surveillance images, maps and trafficking systems” (Staiger 145). The right screen displays the interior of a container inhabited by the asylum seeker, Anatol Kuis-Zimmerman. It is complete with a bed, a small table with food items, cutlery, and a single-range burner, a writing desk with a lamp, multiple maps hanging on the walls, and several personal items. As the video progresses, we witness Anatol sleep, wake up, do yoga, work at the desk, observe and write on the maps hanging around the container, walk around, eat, as well as talk on what appears to be a personal cell-phone.

Biemann brackets *Contained Mobility* with the birth of the individual whom she interviewed and the claim that the video is the only document that accounts for Anatol’s movement. In the very beginning, the rolling subtitles, which provide the narrative focus for the essay film, describe Anatol as the “son of an ethnic German father from the Volga River and a Belorussian mother who were both deported to Eastern Siberia during Stalin’s decree.” The video also shares Anatol’s birthdate as it informs the viewer that on August 5, 1949, Anatol

“[was] born in the Matrosova concentration labor camp in Magadan, the capital of Gulag in the Soviet Far East, site of a goldmine.” We also read that the family “live[d] in a dugout in permafrost soil for two years.” For the remainder of the twenty minutes, the synchronized double video continues to specify Anatol’s multiple cross-border movements, life events, personal milestones, and daily routine practices in countries in which he resided without official permission from the government in question. The text also incorporates historical events, such as the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Chernobyl nuclear accident, specific legal implementations in countries Anatol resided, such as Belarus issuing new passports in 1993, and events specific to Anatol’s own life, such as marriage, children, and learning Portuguese while illegally residing in Lisbon, for example. *Contained Mobility* ends with the following two statements: “This is the only existing record of Anatol’s itinerary. [...] Everything new is born illegal.”

As indicated earlier, a great portion of Anatol’s life is available as a list that continuously rolls on the right side of the screen in chronological order. It includes dates and statements written in English in the present tense. This way, each time the video plays, it relives Anatol’s life (or the portions he willingly shared) all over again. The combination of seeing Anatol go through his daily routines on the right side of the screen and the present tense holds Anatol’s experiences as a refugee and as an illegal migrant in a permanent loop. What was once only discernible and memorable to him is now available on video for repeated viewing. The time that the viewer spends watching *Contained Mobility* is the time during which Anatol is no longer invisible and unknown. Even in its title, *Contained Mobility* offers a play of words on contrasting states of existence. Similar to Christoph Schlingensiefel 2001 happening *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefels Container*, Biemann’s 2004 work condenses spaces such as detention

centers and refugee camps into a single metaphorical container. Upon first look, Anatol's container appears as an immobile box, symbolizing the gap between protective rights regimes and a long migratory existence. Our gaze into the inside of the container is made possible through a surveillance camera, evoking a collapse between public and private life. The conception of a post-national subject, a subject outside of political representation, references the last line, namely that "everything new is born illegal." However, it is important to note that in *Contained Mobility*, the container is a symbol of contradiction in and of itself. On the one hand, its quality of confinement and enclosure represents official spatial practices of control from the receiving country. On the other, that same space mirrors the immobile box to which a citizen or a recognized immigrant returns at the end of the day. The camera Biemann placed to record Anatol during his daily routines does not follow him, resulting in the viewer being left to stare at an empty space for several moments at a time. Furthermore, we do not hear Anatol speak. We are not privy to any confidential or personal conversations that may help us engage with Anatol further, but these possible pieces of information also do not reveal anything that may be used against him. In other words, an officially unrecognized migratory existence does not inevitably imply a binary opposition between the oppressive interests of the state and the migrant's individual resistance. The capability of both life and survival necessitates a far greater complexity in aesthetic representation, which opens up the space for nuanced perspectives on different forms of existence.

In her own analysis of *Contained Mobility*, Ursula Biemann discusses the contemporary condition and simultaneous existence of two things: "prevailing control of mobility"/ "global regulatory network" on the one hand and what she terms as the "unstable, trans-local forms of life that emerge between and around it" (57). Increasingly sophisticated technologies intended to

manage and control global flows are countered by equally inventive tactics of evasion by people questioning the prerogative of access to a political community. Imre Szeman argues that *Contained Mobility* offers forceful and engaged examinations of the ways in which individuals function in a web of economic, geographic, legal, and political systems which shape and determine belonging, “one of the fundamental aspects of being human” (Biemann and Szeman 38-40). Both Biemann and Szeman argue that once the human experience of belonging sifts through different technologies, it is “divided, organized, distributed, arranged, prohibited, emplaced, and displaced” (39).

Biemann cites the “European space” in a time after Schengen in which only the “resourceful and inventive stand a chance of overcoming the imposed barriers” (Biemann 57). Biemann argues that although measures such as the Geneva Convention and Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees are in place, their reactive and general wording make it “virtually impossible to access this right.” What happens then is that we keep migrants in “extraterritorial transit zones,” where national constitutions do not apply and can therefore not be violated. Consequently, individuals who “are not entitled to settle down anywhere” are caught in a prolonged state of legal suspension, which then becomes the “primary mode of migratory subsistence.” Biemann terms this provisional state that is embodied by the reception camps, the refugee camps, and asylum procedures, as a “permanent post-human and post-humanist condition.”

In her discussion of *Contained Mobility*, Staiger identifies the video essay as a “highly stylized...multi-channel visual format using simultaneous projections, audio tracks, and running texts, couched in theoretical discourse that facilitated its dissemination in networks, conferences, and exhibition centers” (Staiger 144). In terms of border discourse, Staiger argues that

Contained Mobility confronts two distinct elements. First, it coordinates “transnational knowledge production.” Staiger defines coordinated, transnational knowledge production as “interstate legal agreements,” such as profiles, trajectories, motives and counterfeits, as well as “health risks.” Second, Staiger claims that an essay such as *Contained Mobility* increases the knowledge of “those involved in channeling migration” to the point that they may “detect debilities of the system in the other” (144-5).

While Staiger recognizes one of the central characteristics of the film essay, namely that it deliberately segues between separate styles, tone, and/or modes of address, the rest of her comments are unclear. Is an example of a component of “transnational knowledge production” a passport, a visa, or another form of a travel document? How does the element of “motives and counterfeits” fit in? We may argue that a counterfeit visa is a tangible product of “transnational knowledge production,” but the concept of “motives” is a subjective, cognitive aspect of human behavior. Staiger’s mention of “health risks” also receives no further explication. Furthermore, the phrase “those involved in channeling migration” does not specify whether the individuals meant are the migrants, national authorities, or both.

Staiger continues in her assessment by claiming that the video essay, especially Biemann’s *Contained Mobility*, acts as a “third form of critical intelligence” (145). According to Staiger, the video essay cites and invokes visual conventions from cartography and documentaries to databases and CCTV streams to “inscribe trajectories and motion, surveillance and capture in the viewer’s visual field.” It presents itself as a self-reflexive arts practice “hinged between transmission, information, and mediatisation” (Staiger 145).

Staiger draws on Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* to argue that the knowledge system defining a migrant’s status or condition coheres with the way the states administer

individual biological life to generate a social body politic. As Foucault claims, the social body politic is a result of the “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault 140). Staiger argues that Biemann’s *Contained Mobility* as well as *Remote Sensing* (2001) and *Europlex* (2003) may be read as reflections on Foucault’s biopolitical concerns, updated for the late 20th century nation-state marked by mobility and migration. Here we may also note Alison Brysk’s concept of the “citizenship gap,” that is, the legal disparity between citizenship rights and human rights. If we think back to the first chapter, we may recall Rafiq Islam’s critique of the official definition of the illegal and the refugee, both of which arise out of the discrepancies between the needs of the migrant and the legal structures and requirements generated by the receiving country. In her 2004 work *The Rights of Others*, Seyla Benhabib argues that the citizenship gap is especially present at borders, as they mark geographically and politically the limit of national entities: ““Nowhere are the tensions between the demands of postnational universalistic solidarity and the practices of exclusive membership more apparent than at the site of territorial borders and boundaries” (Benhabib 17).

We may note here that Biemann pushes the essay film’s purpose of challenging enduring perspectives even further. Her desire to gather the information on Anatol’s life as accurately and as meticulously as possible serves not only to prove his existence, but to absolutely outline every step he took since he began his life as a migrant. *Contained Mobility* includes the exact days, months, years, and in some cases, specific timeframes, alongside exhaustive descriptions on every movement and event in Anatol’s life. Similar to the depiction of Hassan, Lial, and Maradona’s lives in *Neukölln Unlimited*, *Contained Mobility* is an aesthetic product that exposes Anatol’s existence beyond the point of anyone who may hold an official permit to reside in a

country. However, it is important to note that several other issues arise in this case. As Biemann suggests, on the one hand this may be the missing, “fair” record of Anatol’s life required to finally grant him asylum. On the other hand, we come upon the question of how far authorial presence may reach when it comes to documenting the officially undocumented. The act of dislocation results in an immediate rupture from the grasp of the state. In other words, a split from an officially recognized – and, recognizable – sociopolitical status troubles representation. Although she does not state it clearly, Biemann distinguishes between “the mode of representation” in her essay films and what she considers “actual life” as it is being filmed. Biemann confirms this when she states that “none of the images of *Contained Mobility* document reality” because “every image is an artificial construct” (Biemann, “Contained Mobility” 59), that, in this case, results in a conceptual statement about a state of being in this world. Biemann once again reaffirms this when she recalls the moment she supposedly stopped filming and offered Anatol help in the form of buying him a Polish passport. As this was before Poland entered the EU, Biemann claims that this would have been the easiest way for Anatol to obtain “a much-desired license for free circulation” in that he could replace the forged Polish passport with an EU one once the country entered the union. Anatol declined the offer and Biemann’s reaction included the following evaluation: “salvation would have meant the death of his problem, which by now was obviously not only a burden but also the condition with which he has come to identify: to march in the cracks between nations as the post-migratory subject into which he has mutated” (59).

There are several matters of note here. First, as the essay film, and especially in the way Biemann constructs hers, is responsible for both producing another perspective on an extant issue and for preserving something in the process of thinking, why would the artist then suggest a split

between the mode of representation and its partnered reality? In other words, the essay film, with its transgressions and risk of idiosyncrasies, holds the capacity for continuous intellectual and artistic innovation and with that, the promise of depicting what we perceive in a more complex, constructive – “real” – manner. To think back to the documentary, the creative representation of reality holds great potential for bringing us closer to perceiving and understanding it better in the first place. Furthermore, Biemann’s offer to buy Anatol a forged Polish passport is problematic. Although her decision to help him originated positively, the very fact that he needed help, or that Biemann presumed that he may need help, is prescriptive. Biemann’s offer of a forged Polish passport feeds into the established binary of national authority vs. migrant. It suggests that the migrant still must source official help from the very side that produced the normative environment and standardized regulation in which s/he exists. Biemann’s reaction supports this problematic view. By describing her offer of a forged Polish passport as “salvation,” Anatol’s way of life as both a “burden” and as a “condition with which he has come to identify,” Anatol himself as a “post-migratory subject into which he has mutated,” and by recognizing national borders as such with everything else being “the cracks between,” Biemann unfortunately diminishes her work’s potential. She feeds into the very same system she sought (or had the chance) to disidentify when she decided to make *Contained Mobility*. Instead of directly intervening and to really try to preserve something in the process of thinking, it may be productive to instead closely observe the details of another aesthetic product, namely a work Biemann completed four years after *Contained Mobility*.

4.3.2 *X-Mission* (2008)

X-Mission (2008) is a 40-minute video essay that explores the logic of the refugee camp as one of the oldest “extra-territorial” zones. Biemann traveled to three Palestinian camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank to examine how over the course of sixty years, individuals living in these areas had to build a civil life in the camps, ultimately adopting an intense microcosm with complex relations to their respective homelands and to related communities abroad. Taking the Palestinian refugee camps as a case in point, *X-Mission* engages with historical, legal, mythological, symbolic, and urban discourses that give meaning to this exceptional space (Biemann, “Geobodies”). Biemann uses these approaches to focus on the fact that according to International Law, the Palestinian refugee represents the “exception within the exception.” Considering the fundamental connections among separated Palestinian populations, the video situates the Palestinian refugee in the context of a global diaspora and considers what Biemann terms as “post-national models of belonging” that emerged through the networked matrix of this widely dispersed community (Biemann, “Articulating the Exception” 94).

Biemann partitioned the essay film into six segments which include “Juridical Space,” “Symbolic Space,” “Zone of Exception,” “Mythological Time,” and “Post-National Space.” Documentary footage is interspersed with manipulated sound bites, interviews, and multiple-layer video montage deriving from both downloaded and Biemann’s self-recorded sources. The narrative relies on a series of interviews made with both refugees and scholarly experts in their respective fields. Throughout *X-Mission*, they include and are identified as the following: “The Lawyer” Susan Akram (Boston School of Law), “The Historian” Beshara Doumani (University of California, Berkeley), “The Anthropologist” Orub El Abed (International Studies, Geneva), “The Sociologist” Sari Hanafi, “The Architect” Ismaël Sheikh Hassan (Reconstruction

Committee, Tripoli), “The Anthropologist” Samar Kanafani (Beirut), “The Journalist” Bilal Khabeiz, “The Refugee” Abu Mujahed, and “The Refugee” Shaadi Abu Zarqa (Deheishe, West Bank).

The contextual justification for *X-Mission* indirectly reveals the power struggles outside of the aesthetic product. In her reflections on the film essay, Biemann clarifies that *X-Mission* is “not directed towards backing up, or challenging, existing positions in the conflict” (Biemann 94). She underscores that she is most interested in studying the “Palestinian refugee case” through the lens of multi-disciplinary knowledge gained in the analysis of globalization, transnationalism, and “other forms of political extraterritoriality.” While Biemann’s intent was not to insert consciously an evaluation of sociopolitical and legal issues which the Palestinian people encounter, both her authorial presence and her choice of the medium of the essay film counteract her statement of neutrality. Even before focusing on the multi-media construction of the narrative in *X-Mission*, we may note that Biemann included a carefully selected group of individuals to interview for the essay film. Although titles such as “The Lawyer,” “The Refugee,” and “The Anthropologist” equate one individual to stand in for the entirety of the discursive approach from which they speak, the institutions, geographic locations, and names suggest that Biemann focused on those who at the very least have intellectual roots to the territories in question. *X-Mission* is therefore not only the product of Western-sourced collaborations as it strives to engage with those who are close to the issues in question. Furthermore, Biemann describes this arrangement of discursive interrelations as reflecting on an “extreme form of extraterritoriality” in which populations of Palestinians are “to be defined and regulated according to the humanitarian conventions of the United Nations and the volatile domain of international politics” (Biemann 95). Phrases such as “to be defined and regulated”

and “volatile domain of...politics” reveal precisely a critical position on the topic. An aesthetic, new media product of the early twenty-first century, *X-Mission* forms a critical knowledgescape that directly addresses refugee-dom in one of the most complex territorial configurations, namely in Palestinian refugee camps.

During the first segment, titled “Juridical Space,” “The Lawyer” Susan Akram provides the historical precedent for *X-Mission* from her legal perspective. Akram states that the United Nations first created “the problem” of the Palestinian refugees. Beginning in 1948, Akram declares that the Palestinians were to have two agencies devoted exclusively to them: the UNCCP (United Nations Conciliation Commission on Palestine), entrusted with complete international protection and resolution mandate, and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Work Agency), whose job was to provide food, clothing, and shelter. Because the Palestinians were then seen to be taken care of (theoretically and diplomatically) under the UNCCP and the UNRWA, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (founded in 1950 immediately before the first Convention Regarding to the Status of Refugees discussed in chapter 1), instituted a special clause excluding the Palestinians from its mandate. When it became clear that the UNCCP was unable to resolve the Palestinian conflict, its funding was substantially reduced, which incapacitated it in its role as protector. Within four years, the Palestinians lost this international protection or that provided by the UNHCR to other refugee groups. Consequently, the Palestinians have no official agency for interventions on an international level and no access to the International Court of Justice. As Akram states and Biemann repeats in a voiceover in the video, this protection gap has never been closed, “not least because the absence of any legal framework has been very convenient to the power politics behind negotiations” (Biemann,

“Articulating the Exception” 97, *X-Mission*). Ultimately, a major refugee case was pushed outside international law, where it has remained for decades since.

First, we may recognize both the UNCC and the UNRWA as additional products of the standardized, normative approach to international legislation regarding cross-border movement after the Second World War. We may think back to chapter 1, specifically to Rafiq Islam’s exposition on the history of the refugee legal system in which he underscores that diplomatic approaches such as the Conventions Regarding the Status of Refugees are designed to diplomatically recognize, but not to proactively resolve the status of being a refugee. In situations involving sudden mass movements due to natural disasters, political conflicts, and violent persecutions, diplomatically recognizing the existence of these events and the involved entities is not enough. Mere recognition neither engages with nor does it attempt to solve such a problem, it only confirms its existence. *X-Mission* pushes observations such as these this even further because it takes as its focus a group of people who twice lost juridical and to some extent, political protection, from both the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and from the UNCCP. A state of exemption within the exemption, as Biemann concludes, reflects a twice-formed power geometry, which continues to remain unaltered as international authorities overlap in their deficiency. The resulting absence of an accountable legal and sociopolitical structure in the Palestinian refugee camps leaves two disparate possibilities: the risk of (para)military invasion and/or a complete structural takeover by the refugees who inhabit these spaces.

The third segment in *X-Mission* engages with these two probabilities. Titled “Zone of Exception,” it recounts the life-cycle of Nahr el Bared, a refugee camp in northern Lebanon that was destroyed in the summer of 2007. “The Sociologist” Sari Hanafi explains how prior to 2007, Lebanese authorities allowed no infrastructure to connect Nahr el Bared to Tripoli, a city

right outside of the camp in Lebanon. Such marginalization and governing by emergency law resulted in a condition in which the refugee camp became vulnerable to other “extraterritorial elements...[such as] al Qaeda” (Biemann, “Articulating the Exception” 97-99, *X-Mission*). In the summer of 2007, the Lebanese Army breached international convention and entered Nahr el Bared to “eradicate a small number of foreign Islamists who had settled in the isolated camp.” The operation grew out of proportion, and instead of securing the refugees’ space, the army razed the entire camp to the ground and declared it a zone of exception. The 40,000 refugees became refugees once more as they lost all of their belongings and were forced to flee to another overpopulated camp in the region.

The segment “Zone of Exception” begins with the image of a helicopter hovering over a series of destroyed concrete buildings on a bright sunny day. In the subsequent shots we see several women and children of various ages slowly walking over uneven, muddy ground that alternates between multiple bodies of water, which are covered with improvised bridges made of shaved tree logs. It is almost sunset, and in the background, we see a blue “UNICEF” tarp hanging on the side of a makeshift house. The following shot features “The Architect” Ismaël Sheikh Hassan, part of the camp Reconstruction Committee in Tripoli. However, we do not immediately see Hassan’s face. Instead, the shot hovers over his hand and a pad of paper on which he slowly draws out a map of the location of the old refugee camp, the surrounding bodies of water, and certain territorial details relevant to understanding the distribution of space in this particular area. As Hassan draws, we hear him say: “Nahr el Bared means Cold River...This is the river...And this is the sea...This is the old camp, right here...and this is the main road, the economic heart of the camp...the extension is an area around the old camp here...The government has allowed people to return only to certain areas.”

The establishing shots in “Zone of Exception” serve to both remember and redraw the historicized space of Nahr el Bared. Although we hear Ismaël Sheikh Hassan explain the distribution of the land and we see his hands drawing, the immediate focus is on what is being rendered, and not on any possible discursive approach we may draw from “The Architect’s” statements. As Nahr el Bared no longer exists as it was and a new refugee camp is still in the process of becoming, the filmic shot of the drawing bridges the once-present and the yet-to-be spatiality in a direct rendering of what Massey identified as a spatio-temporal event. A product of the interrelations of past and present, and between various levels and registers of interactions, including the Nahr el Bared refugees, the Lebanese Army, and the newly introduced Reconstruction Committee, Biemann’s shot of Hassan’s drawing documents that which official entities have avoided to recognize.

As Hassan is finishing the last statement, the frame immediately cuts to a composite image, consisting of a woman standing on a street (presumably in the old refugee camp) in the background and a smaller, separate video superimposed in the middle of that frame that shows the same street after it was bombed. We see soldiers and civilians running. The frame then cuts back to Hassan’s drawing and he continues to explain how the territory on which the old refugee camp stood is completely off limits, how not a single building was left standing. The next shot returns to another composite image, this time with the main background image showing a completely destroyed building and the separate video in the middle showing soldiers walking around tanks, talking to one another, or sitting on the ground eating, and smoking hookahs. While we again hear Hassan’s voice explain what may happen with the destroyed buildings and with the belongings in the old refugee camp, we see a shot of a room whose left side completely retained its shape after the conflict. It includes wall-to-wall shelves of books, complete with

what appear to be rare bindings in many cases. Hassan shares that the plot of land is one of the densest places on earth. “For the people, the old architectural form of the camp made a lot of sense. They lived in neighborhoods which were the villages of Palestine. For example, all of the people from Safuri, when they arrived at the camp, they lived next to each other, and they named the camp Safuri.” Hassan underscores that such decisions on part of the refugees relate to their origins, to their right of return, and to their sense of community. As Hassan continues to explain the logic of the old refugee camp from the Palestinians’ point of view, we see shots of the camp El Baddawi. Children are running around on a densely populated pedestrian road, a group of women are chatting off to the side, others are pushing strollers and picking up soccer balls, while another group of men are seated, talking, or playing board games.

The second part of the segment “Zone of Exception” develops the focus on the refugees’ actions. Although a refugee does not yet speak, the images we see from El Baddawi center around the individuals themselves and on brief aspects of their daily routine. At this point we may say that Biemann decided to let recordings of El Baddawi stand in during a discussion of what was once Nahr el Bared, which may point to the Western impulse to easily substitute one group of individuals for another. However, at the time of filming, Nahr el Bared was no more. At the end of the segment, Biemann does show images of the old refugee camp, a visual of a destroyed ghost town full of brown, roof-less houses whose rooms lay bare and empty, often completely visible to the outside. At the moment when Hassan draws and speaks of the displaced refugees, Biemann depicts narrow, busy streets and alleyways filled with children playing. What is the intended effect? It is the autonomous act of how groups of refugees inscribe their existence upon arrival at a refugee camp. By naming it after their village or by recreating the architectural form of their own version of urban familiarity, *X-Mission* puts the

Lefebvrian historicizing of the space and Massey's process of the spatio-temporal construction of (a new) place in the hands of the refugees.

In a wrap-up to "Zones of Exception," Biemann emphasizes the interaction between the Palestinian inhabitants in old Nahr el Bared, El Baddawi, and Al Fawwar, a West Bank camp, and the military authorities responsible for maintaining security in the spaces. We now completely see "The Architect" Ismaël Sheikh Hassan as he sits on a sofa in what appears to be his own living space. Directly looking at the camera, Hassan explains that all three camps house(d) anywhere from 30,000 to 40,000 people. Entirely pedestrian, with small houses and semi-public, semi-private spaces used by women and by children, the intimacy of these spaces "are appreciated in Islamic societies" because they give a feeling of "enclosure and privacy to the women and children" when they meet to talk and spend time together in the afternoon, for example. Hassan also explains how the camps end up having incredibly windy, narrow roads and alleys because of how the inhabitants make use of them. The independent, informal arrangement of the camp spaces "make the army and the state afraid" (*X-Mission*), however. Army vehicles do not fit onto the streets, which combined with the lack of infrastructure connection to neighboring cities, and the exclusive detached governing by emergency law, prohibits any official, standardized control of the camps. A military zone coincides with an urban zone which in turn encounters political and juridical issues. The problem, as Hassan explains, is that the state wishes to solve a security issue through urban design. If one does that, the result is probably a "well-executed security plan but a terrible city" (*X-Mission*).

As Biemann notes, the struggle to define refugee space suggests that the camp is a space of dispossession and repossession – the dispossession of the right to official international protection and the repossession of space on part of the refugees (Biemann, "Articulating the

Exception” 100-1). While existing outside of officially defined or typified political and cultural distinctions, Palestinians negotiate their space. The literal placement outside of nationally conceived structures and the accompanying laws allows inhabitants in each refugee camp to “re-inscribe” themselves into their own spatial fabric. It is notable, however, that the refugee camps may mimic previous neighborhoods and/or names of towns and cities from which the people came. This not only attests to their sense of community and to an extent, to their construction of safety due to their own negotiated pathways and enclosures. It also suggests that the concept of the nation-state, with its structural layers and spatial networks, is replicable by the individual. The very existence of refugees, and of Palestinian refugees especially, is proof of how fallible and incomplete the system of nation-states is. Nevertheless, at the same time this arrangement offers adaptable characteristics which the individual or the group adapts to form their/its own functioning space and network of exchanges. Once again, the fixity or even the lack thereof in this case, assigned by the nation-state and its geopolitical bodies, reveal a significantly more intricate network of exchanges between individual adaptability and national authority, between the restrictions of federally issued parameters and the way human agency transforms these limits into effective habitation practices.

To conclude the discussion of *X-Mission*, let us briefly engage with the final segment of Biemann’s essay film, “Post-National Space.” This time we first hear from “The Historian” Beshara Doumani (University of California, Berkeley) and from one of the refugees featured in the work, Shaadi Abu Zaqra, at the time living in camp Deheishe on the West Bank. Biemann films Doumani in what appears to be an office at work. He is sitting at a conference room desk as he advocates for a change in the way one thinks of Palestinian refugees and of Palestinian refugee camps: “How the Palestinians negotiate this space now and build a nation outside of the

territory should not be perceived only as negative, as a trap...[it] can be seen as a laboratory for other groups of people, whether they are refugees or migrant laborers or people who simply find themselves outside certain spaces that they have long known.” In other words, Doumani speaks of [Palestinian] refugees as not being in a state of weakness. To live through each day, to find meaning in both the physical surroundings and routine decisions, and to plan for a future which includes a dignified life and the rights of any other human being, does not constitute weakness. The perception may be as such because refugees must begin an immediate negotiation of parameters and familiarization of new space through methods of their own choosing.

In subsequent shots we do not immediately see, but we first hear Abu Zaqra’s voice. He is speaking in English in a voiceover that accompanies a composite image including four different elements: one, a backdrop of satellite images of the West Bank at night that fills up the entire frame; two, on the left side of the frame, a transparent image of a computer screen depicting a website superimposed onto the night backdrop; three, on the right hand side, a transparent profile of Abu Zaqra; and four, a graphic superimposed over the entire frame consisting of dots bearing names of different refugee camps. The dots connect in “real-time” as the video advances. Biemann accompanies the composite image with pulsating sound bites which interact with Abu Zaqra’s voice. In addition to his profile we now see a faint outline of his hand as it moves a mouse cursor over the computer monitor on the left side of the film frame. Abu Zaqra tells us that the website is called “Across Borders” and that it serves as a connection between eleven refugee camps in West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. As he clicks around on the website, he tells the camera: “When we click here at Jalazon, another refugee camp close to Ramallah...you know, sometimes we cannot move between Palestinian cities...so if I come to this website, I can see daily news about what is going on there...we have parents

who live in Lebanon...I can just come to this website and know everything that is going on in the refugee camps [there]" (*X-Mission*). The informality and ease with which Abu Zaqra speaks of the website and of its purpose suggests that the virtual connection between the refugee camps has become the norm among many families. The inability to physically visit his parents will never be replaced. However, "Across Borders," along with our previous discussion of the autonomous architectural setup in the camps, and the resulting network of exchanges between individual adaptability and national authority opens a porous space of communication which redefines the traditional perception of refugee reality.

At the very end of "Post-National Space," and with that, the end of *X-Mission*, we hear Biemann in voice-over as she recounts what Abu Zaqra told her. As we hear Biemann the entire frame shows Abu Zaqra standing outside against what appears to be a backdrop of Deheishe. He is talking, motioning, and gesturing informally, but the sound, apart from Biemann's voice and a faint electronic melody, is muted. Biemann tells us that the most important thing for Abu Zaqra is to be able to choose between staying in the refugee camp, between returning to the village, or going elsewhere. Biemann shares that "he likes France" and that "he spent six years of his life there." Abu Zaqra also "likes Paris" and so "maybe he will decide to live there." But if he opted to go back to his village, what would happen? "He says that he doesn't know to plant a tree. In the refugee camp, he is very active. He does theater, makes music, and holds media workshops, but back in the village, what would he do? He would have to start all over again, live in a tent and rebuild his entire life." At the end, the frame freezes, and the image of Abu Zaqra fades out into black.

There are several noteworthy elements here. First, Biemann utilizes several aesthetic and technological registers of the essay film at the beginning of "Post-National Space." The website

“Across Borders,” the satellite image of the West Bank at night, the superimposed image connecting the refugee camps graphically, and Abu Zaqra’s voice, among others, render the complexity of his circumstances. The transparency of the composite cinematic frame mirrors a level of visibility Abu Zaqra and other Palestinian families attain through “Across Borders.” They cannot freely move between their separate locations, however, the information on the occurrences in the refugee camps travels freely throughout the porous online networks. This, once again, represents both Massey’s notion of places as spatio-temporal events. Abu Zaqra’s experience in Deheishe is connected to his family members’ elsewhere, as it is the product of interrelations established through various levels and registers of interactions (as represented in Biemann’s composite images). However, as we move through this segment, Biemann’s sudden decision to speak for Abu Zaqra at the very end of *X-Mission* is unexpected and unnecessarily restricting. In the previous sequence we heard him speak and we partially saw him on camera. In the case of filming any other experts such as “The Architect” or “The Sociologist,” for example, Biemann interviewed them in traditional expository and participatory documentary approach. The information Abu Zaqra shares is crucial, however, and it would prove to be aesthetically and analytically effective if he were to have shared it directly with the viewer. According to the information we hear, Abu Zaqra lived in France for a number of years. More importantly, he has made a routine, active life for himself in Deheishe, a life that would cause him to become a refugee all over again if he were to leave the camp and return to his birthplace. It is also highly remarkable that the description of the downside of a possible return is life “in a tent.” Abu Zaqra equates the living arrangement traditionally associated with the refugee not with Deheishe, the refugee camp in which he resides, but with the village from which he came. Pointedly stated, Deheishe appears to embody the definition of home[land] for Abu Zaqra. If

Abu Zaqra would have shared this information on his own, it would have further strengthened all four characteristics of the essay film, namely that the focus is on the refugee, that we are not feeding into standard histories because we hearing from an individual, that we are seeing this through multiple aesthetic styles, and that authorial presence, although unavoidable, is serving to defy enduring perspectives on how we perceive the refugee, the asylum seeker, and the illegal. Abu Zaqra speaking independently would have also predisposed Massey's notion of power-geometry towards the social actor as was the case in "Juridical Space."

4.4 CONCLUSION: WHAT REMAINS

As discussed in prior chapters, works such as the postdramatic happening *Ausländer Raus!* *Schlingensiefs Container* and the expository/essayistic documentary *Neukölln Unlimited* focus on what occurs as a result of discrepancies between migration control in the receiving country and the needs of the migrant. Neither work provides a clear outcome or a definite solution because the focus is precisely on that which the migrant experiences: an in-flux existence and a steady negotiation of official parameters resulting in moments of discernable identity. As *Ausländer Raus!* and *Neukölln Unlimited* present these discrepancies at varying stages, they reveal a significantly more intricate network of exchanges between individual adaptability and official authority, between the restrictions of federally issued documents and the way human agency transforms these limits into effective habitation practices.

Ursula Biemann's *Contained Mobility* and *X-Mission* push these elements further. While depicting their respective social actors, both works engage with newly found capabilities in aesthetic practice to reformulate the domain of symbolic production. This consequently leads to

a new configuration of various frames of reference, which in turn provides a discursive expansion and additional focus on content-oriented work in the arts. Encapsulating the conjunction between geography and visual culture, the essay films an acute awareness of both the socio-political circumstances influencing the social actors and of how their legal and personal identities are constructed and represented through film. Both *Contained Mobility* and *X-Mission* experiment with multi-layered and synthetic soundscapes, asynchronous sound-image relations, intellectual montage, and textual as well as graphic overlays in a single frame that often re-signify known information. The emerging critical knowledgescapes offer an understanding of dynamic temporality, a creative representation of knowledge transfer, an understanding of space as a socio-cultural process, and an awareness of power trajectories in all three, that is, in time, space, and the creative representation of knowledge transfer. Ultimately, the critical knowledgescape gives new acoustic, textual, and visual form to longstanding intellectual approaches and perspectives.

With regards to *X-Mission* specifically, Biemann's goal was to find a way to speak of Palestinian refugees without positioning them in relation to Israel or to the conflict. In other words, Biemann wished to engage with the refugees' lived experiences on a platform other than the standard approach of years past. *X-Mission* accomplishes this in two ways. One, the work includes social actors and scholarly and professional experts (such as "The Lawyer," "The Anthropologist," and so on) who have common circumstantial and intellectual roots to the territories in question. This results in *X-Mission* not being the product of solely Western-sourced collaborations as it strives to engage with those who are close to the issues in question. Two, in segments such as "Zone of Exception," *X-Mission* places Lefebvre's historicizing of space and Massey's process of the spatio-temporal construction of (a new) place in the hands of the

refugees. We witness moments in which Palestinian refugees adapt characteristics of the nation-state to negotiate a new space and make it a home. This is further supported by Shaadi Abu Zaqra's realization that if he were to go back to his "homeland," his life would begin all over again. However, unfortunately it is in this moment where *X-Mission* falls short in one significant aspect, namely in following through on the refugees' own voices and comprehensive identities. We hear Shaadi Abu Zaqra speak at the beginning of "Post-National Space," yet only a portion of him is visible. In the moment where we see him completely in front of the camera as we saw any one of the other scholarly and professional experts, his voice is muted and Biemann speaks for him. This not only minimizes his identity, it also feeds into the "tired binary arguments" Biemann seeks to avoid in her essay films. What remains as a result of Biemann's own orchestrated conclusion in *X-Mission*, however, are questions which may propel us forward when thinking about how contemporary works depict cross-border movement. Is it possible to recognize an individual's state of existence in such a way so that it does not favor the destructive facilitators that contributed to the state in question? Is it possible to move away from binary arguments, such as positioning those in control opposite individuals who passively adopt parameters, for example? Is it productive to state that the ways in which refugees successfully and productively negotiate their space ought to be seen as a model for historicizing cross-border migration, so that we may ultimately move past viewing it as an exceptional reality and begin accepting it as one of the normative ways of life?

CONCLUSION

My thought-process for the dissertation began with the single, key question: why is migration, an essential characteristic that helps define human existence, an issue in the twenty-first century? I immediately discovered that it was not just any type of migration that elicits political concern and social critique. It is the rapid, unplanned movement across a national border that results in a seemingly widespread, collective outpour of disapproval, fear, and judgment. Individuals who must flee their countries of origin due to fear of political and/or religious persecution, natural disasters, and live political conflicts, carry with them a predetermined burden even before they arrive in their respective countries of destination (if they get the chance to arrive at all). The burden hides in labels such as “asylum seeker,” “refugee,” and “illegal.” What was once an accepted status of “national” or “citizen” transforms into a vague and insufficient labeling with the unplanned, or rather, officially unauthorized crossing of a nationally defined border. The path to identity is no longer clear, and with that, the path to re-establishing one’s routine life enters an unknown period. Up until my study, the time between the rapid crossing of a national border and the forming of a new identity has been undervalued. It is what occurs during this process, however, that provides the key to answering the initial question, namely why rapid migration in the twenty-first century has turned first into an issue, and then into an unsolvable phenomenon.

Throughout my dissertation, I have continually shown that there are three sets of participants. First, we have individuals and/or entities who standardize perception of cross-border movement and implement rules and regulations for it. These persons, organizations, and rules come in the form of diplomats, policy regulators, presidents, federal governments, and international treaties, for example. Second, we have individuals and/or groups of people who actively perform cross-border movement. These migrants leave their country of origin for a new destination due to an incident that immediately threatens their freedom, safety, and/or survival. Third, we have examples of cultural production that recognize and seek to (re)present the interplay between standardized perception of cross-border movement (as produced by the first set of participants) and the complexity that actually results out of such an approach (as presented by the second set of participants, the migrants). These examples of cultural production come in the form of art and theater happenings, gallery installations, fly-on-the-wall and expository/essayistic documentary approaches, and film essays, to name a few.

In my first chapter, I strategically outlined how our modern perception of migration came to be. As Gilles Deleuze's 1990 "Postscript on the Societies of Control" underlines, although Michel Foucault located the disciplinary societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they reached their heights at the outset of the twentieth (Deleuze 3). I considered several specific economic, historical, legal, and sociological discourses to show that the reason why we still cannot productively handle rapid mass migrations lies in an inherent, accepted way of categorizing and representing migrants. This mode of statist normativity in which societies function presents a dangerous problem to those who do not successfully fit its structure, and yet, it is an elusive concept precisely because it has become the leading approach in understanding migration.

To illustrate the importance of my concept of statist normativity, I proved that the fall of the Austrian, Ottoman, German, and Russian empires in the late nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries brought a foundational change in the status of the border. The perception of movement shifted from crossing regional lines within an empire to crossing borders that belong to different nation-states. Consequently, asserting and thus strengthening new national borders in the early twentieth century gave way to fixed notions of self-governance. An element of this self-governance on part of newly formed nation-states included intensive bilateral, regional, and international treaties seeking to regulate immigration. Decrees such as the 1938 Convention Regarding Status of Refugees Coming from Germany and the 1951/1967 Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees, for example, reevaluated an already available symbolic element – such as the “refugee” – to fit the concept of the nation-state. Consequently, while the second half of the twentieth century paved the way for standardized parameters and regulated migration, that same system spontaneously excluded those who were not able to fit into a politically established parameter of belonging. A geographically binding contract such as the 1985 Schengen Agreement supports this even further. The treaty was among the first to focus on simultaneous, multi-national policing. It also reflected member states’ interest in replacing intra-member state border controls with a comprehensive policing system. An example of supranational jurisdiction such as the Schengen further reinforced the dividing line between “us,” vs. “them,” between those belonging to a member state and those who cross its borders seeking refuge.

After showing that the late nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries brought a foundational change in the status of the border, I turned to Germany. In my discussion, I illustrated how the political and economic history of the country contains some of the most significant developments for examining both migration and statist normativity. I confirmed that

Germany not only experienced its own process of unification – it also held the unique position of being part of the Eastern border of the European Union in the second half of the twentieth century. Germany played a historical role in both unleashing and experiencing waves of population movement. Following the Second World War, over ten million *Auslandsdeutsche* escaped their primary resident country and crossed the border into Germany. Furthermore, between 1955 and 1973 the West German government encouraged the immigration of Gastarbeiter to assist in the rebuilding of the economic workforce and infrastructure. However, a country that experienced its own complex arranging and re-arranging of identity and sociopolitical perspectives, a country that accepted refugees after the Second World War, shifted its attitudes toward immigration in the last twenty years of the twentieth century. Helmut Kohl's 1983 utterance „Deutschland ist kein Einwanderungsland“ [“Germany is not an immigration country“] signaled a break with previous dispositions and regulations. While Articles 116a and 16a cleared the way for German war expellees and refugees to cross the national border, Article 116a and the 1993 amendment to Article 16a severely moderated the number of refugees allowed to enter. The 1951/1967 Conventions Regarding the Status of Refugees held strong decades later. Proving a well-founded fear of persecution was once again a subjective act forced to function in an ideally objective, legal manner while anti-refugee and anti-“foreigner” sentiment grew in Germany both socially and politically. Germany experienced both division and divisiveness among its own people due to World War Two consequences and the difficulties of uniting two Germany-s after 1989. Nevertheless, in the 1990s, the government amended its Basic Law to decrease the number of incoming refugees and the number of refugees ultimately allowed to remain for the long term.

Here we see that second part of the twentieth century ushered in an era of normative regulations. Human mobility on part of migrants on the one hand, and control on part of persons and entities acting on behalf of nation-states on the other, coalesce to present philosophical and tangible difficulties. How is one to regulate an aspect of life that continuously evolves?

This question continued in chapter 2, as in this discussion I focused on illustrating statist normativity by way of a cultural product. Christoph Schlingensiefel's 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich – Erste Österreichische Koalitionswoche* [*Please love Austria – First Austrian Coalition Week*] and Paul Poet's resulting 2001 documentary *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefels Container* [*Foreigners Out! Schlingensiefel's Container*] expose statist normativity through Schlingensiefel's approach of "Widersprüchlichkeit" [contrariness]. I elaborated on the notion of "Widersprüchlichkeit" by first showing that Schlingensiefel cultivated his hallmark approach through experimental films laden with derogatory reflections on Germany's political history. In my discussions of *Tunguska – die Kisten sind da!* [*Tunguska – the Crates are Delivered!*] and the *Deutschlandtrilogie* in particular, I stressed that the films' lack of continuity, blatant disparagement of cultural norms, and over-the-top execution are purposefully there. Schlingensiefel saw this approach as the only way to reflect Germany's sociopolitical climate at the time. In his mind, nothing was resolved after the Second World War, and he attacked any claim that the people living in Germany had found a way to move beyond some of the catalysts of the conflict. Schlingensiefel continued his societal critiques in postdramatic theater works such as *Rocky Dutschke '68* and *Wahlkampfzirkus – Chance 2000* [*Election Campaign Circus – Chance2000*]. The first theater work in which Schlingensiefel orchestrated direct encounters with the public, *Rocky Dutschke '68* forced the participants into a deliberate and strategic ambiguity in which the performers neither rejected nor affirmed their adopted activist role models. Instead,

it forced the audience to critically assess the inheritance of the 1968ers, including the movement's failure to achieve some of its main goal as well as the ongoing potential of such activism. The genre hybrid *Wahlkampfzirkus* collided several framing devices, including theater performance, "freak show," and political event, in such a manner that all three initially complemented one another only to immediately contrast, and even undermine each other. This was Schlingensief's signature. He did not seek to solve or even to mediate the ongoing sociopolitical issues in Germany. Instead, he attended to the very elements that he saw as contributing to another wave of cultural regression, presented them theatrically, and forced the participants to cycle through the scenarios until there was nothing left to embrace and/or imitate.

This trend of overidentifying and therefore exposing cultural and political regression reached a peak in the 2000 happening *Bitte liebt Österreich*. Both the happening and the documentary present the interplay between policies of Austria's xenophobic FPÖ party and several asylum seekers who lived in Schlingensief's Big Brother-inspired containers for the duration of the happening. In his happening, Schlingensief aurally, spatially, and visually represented officially implemented parameters and political opinions regarding those who crossed the national border into Austria as "asylum seekers," "illegals," and/or "refugees." Not once did the asylum seekers speak on camera. They did not decide who "visited" them or how their daily routines unfolded. Their identities hid behind wigs, grainy camera shots, and premade "bullet-point" characteristics that were available online for the Austrian public as it voted out its least "favorite" asylum seeker daily. Every morning the asylum seekers awoke to a recording of excerpts from Jörg Haider's speeches while the printed version of the quotes hung on the external façade of the containers. They watched as the Austrian public supported them, condemned them, and, ultimately attacked them in the spirit of "liberation." At this point, the

question of an artist's integrity and moral obligation arises. We may argue that Schlingensiefel knowingly put the asylum seekers at risk from the moment he conceptualized the event. We may also say that putting the individuals through such an unsafe process was highly careless and destructive. However, I firmly maintain that such an evaluation misses the real issues at hand. For example, why did the Austrian public repeatedly get upset over Schlingensiefel's work as it was unfolding while there was an actual detention center for asylum seekers only about 20 kilometers outside of Vienna? Why did not anyone decide to "liberate" those individuals? Furthermore, Schlingensiefel did not force the asylum seekers to experience anything different from what they had already gone through once they crossed the national border into Austria. The difference with *Bitte liebt Österreich*, however, is that all of the different elements coalesced at once: the lack of an autonomous identity, the lack of self-expression, the physical containment in one predetermined space, disapproval from the public, condemnation from political parties, and apathy disguised as momentary support and enthusiastic activism from cultural celebrities. In short, *Ausländer Raus!* captured what happens as a result of discrepancies between migration controls in the country of destination and the needs of the migrant. By "overidentifying" with the power discourse, and thus producing what he termed as "Widersprüchlichkeit" [contrariness] and allowing it to play out without any type of protocol among the public, Schlingensiefel confirmed the asylum seeker's reality at the turn of the new millennium.

In chapter 3, I introduced the concept of dis-identification through Agostino Imondi and Dietmar Ratsch's 2010 documentary *Neukölln Unlimited*. I showed that dis-identification is a direct and successful challenge of officially assigned parameters under statist normativity. *Neukölln Unlimited* presents dis-identification in scenes that show the juxtaposition of officially assigned parameters by the state and the autonomous negotiation on part of those who have been

assigned this official status. The scenes include habitual events such as going to school, working, traveling, and spending time with family and friends. When the documentary begins, we are introduced to the social actors as people who have been living in Germany for sixteen years, and who have been officially identified as asylum seekers. As Germany had (and continues to have) different levels of asylum statuses, what happened to the Akkouchs is that at no point in time did all the family members have the same “status.” The three oldest siblings, Hassan, Lial, and Maradona, obtained varying forms of *Aufenthaltserlaubnis* [permission to reside/stay]. While Lial received three years, Hassan obtain one, and for Maradona this was not specified in the film. Their mother, however, had consistently received *Duldung* [toleration/tolerance visa] from the German authorities. *Duldung* officially prevents an individual from working and from being a successfully active member in society. It also carries the danger that at any point in time, one may be deported.

While Imondi and Ratsch provide this information to the viewer, they do so indirectly. In other words, it is through watching the Akkouch family go about their daily routines that we learn of how they are officially identified by the authorities. The focus in *Neukölln Unlimited* is instead on how Hassan, Lial, and Maradona effectively break from the consequences of *Duldung* and *Aufenthaltserlaubnis*. While their mother cannot officially work, the family must still collectively prove to the German government that they are able to meet a minimum monthly income (set by the government), which in turn will allow them to stay in the country longer. In addition to obtaining an exemplary record from school, which primarily decides the length of Hassan and Lial’s residence permits, all three siblings undertake additional responsibilities and paid jobs. One such well-paying job, a national breakdancing competition outside of Berlin, proves to be a challenge for Maradona because his residence permit does not allow him to travel

outside the Berlin state limits. This, and other activities, carry great weight for the family because their outcome play a significant role in determining the subsequent phase of the social actors' lives. Nevertheless, as Imondi and Ratsch's fly-on-the-wall and expository/essayistic documentary approaches show, the siblings are able to function successfully – albeit with setbacks and challenges – despite what is printed in their Lebanese passports. As I have demonstrated in my detailed discussions of several scenes from the documentary, the personal, everyday identity in *Neukölln Unlimited* - and as such, in the actual lives of the Akkouch family - is a specific, productive self that functions successfully on a daily basis. It overshadows the inexact, limiting language of what a “refugee,” an “asylum seeker,” and/or an “illegal” is officially. By showing how members of the Akkouch family actively negotiate the official social and political assignments of the state, I proved that *Neukölln Unlimited* disidentifies Hassan, Lial, and Maradona as abject, voiceless victims of the state.

My discussions of the postdramatic happening *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefels Container* and of the documentary *Neukölln Unlimited* continually focused on the progression between the crossing of a national border and the forming of a new identity, between officially assigned parameters and the actual practice that results out of such an approach. My analyses of both works concludes that there is neither a clear outcome nor a definite solution as the attention is precisely on that which the migrant experiences: an in-flux existence and a steady negotiation of official parameters resulting in moments of discernable identity. I have shown that *Neukölln Unlimited* undermines fixity assigned by the nation-state and its geopolitical bodies to reveal a significantly more intricate network of exchanges between individual adaptability and national authority, between the restrictions of federally issued documents and the way human agency transforms these limits into effective habitation practices.

In chapter 4, I focused on the concept of critical knowledgescapes in the film essays of Ursula Biemann as a response to statist normativity. After viewing a number of Biemann's works over time, it became apparent that she was especially interested in the simultaneity of the "other's" experience, that is, Biemann wanted to capture the contradictions, formations, and pluralistic modes in which an individual such as a refugee, for example, operates. As such, Biemann is an example of the proliferation of academic and visual work on border issues, geography, and migration. She began developing her approach in the 1980s, a time when the discourse on art, like other academic domains, was considerably influenced by other theoretical currents such as ethnography, cultural and media studies, postcolonial criticism, and feminist theories, to name a few. These interactions provided the instruments for reformulating the domain of symbolic production. Consequently, Biemann's aesthetic practice began to require different frames of reference, all of which would interlock to provide a discursive expansion. Pointedly stated, the visual arts, together with Biemann's film essays, positioned itself in relation to other terrains of knowledge production.

After illustrating statist normativity by way of Schlingensiefel's happening *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefels Container* and after offering an example of a successful challenge through dis-identification in *Neukölln Unlimited*, I introduced the concept of critical knowledgescapes as a comprehensive approach in which to analyze the occurrences between the rapid crossing of a national border and the forming of a new identity. In general, a critical knowledgescape is a conceptual framework with which to closely engage with and analyze complex aesthetic products. It is not a linear argument but a terrain of thought. The element of "terrain of thought" is crucial, for the complexity of an individual's experience cannot be effectively understood by way of theoretical analyses from one single discourse, through the representation of one single

genre or creative mode, or even by way of one single history. In the case of Ursula Biemann's work, for example, the critical knowledgescape rendered includes multi layered and synthetic soundscapes, asynchronous sound-image relations, intellectual montage, and textual as well as graphic overlays in a single frame that often re-signify known information from intellectual domains in geography, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies.

In my discussions of *Contained Mobility* and *X-Mission*, I have shown that Biemann deploys three elements in her work as part of critical knowledgescapes. First, Biemann engages genre strategies of the essay film. Second, Biemann develops the cultural-anthropologically inspired concept of "knowledgescapes." Third, Biemann's film essays include compelling representations of discourses in critical geography. A 21-minute synchronized double video from 2004 that shares visual and textual information on (then) refugee Anatol Kuis-Zimmerman, *Contained Mobility* is an aesthetic product that exposes Anatol's life beyond the point of anyone who may hold an official permit to reside in a country. The personal milestones in his life, available to the viewer through the continuously rolling subtitles, reveal a multi-dimensional existence that pushes against any belief that a refugee, an asylum seeker, or an illegal is to be identified solely by the act of having once crossed a national border.

Biemann carried this notion further four years later in her work *X-Mission*. A 40-minute video essay that explores the logic of the refugee camp as one of the oldest "extra-territorial" zones, *X-Mission* examines how over the course of sixty years, individuals living in Palestinian camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank built a new civil life in the camps, ultimately adopting an intense microcosm with complex relations to their respective homelands and to related communities abroad. Taking the Palestinian refugee camps as a case in point, *X-Mission* engages with historical, legal, mythological, symbolic, and urban discourses that give meaning to

this exceptional space. With *X-Mission*, Biemann utilized the film essay to its fullest, interspersing documentary footage with manipulated sound bites, interviews, and multiple-layer video montage deriving from both downloaded and the artist's self-recorded sources. What Biemann accomplished is the focused rendering of the new civil life in the refugee camps, in particular when she speaks to "The Architect" Ismaël Sheikh Hassan and to "The Refugee" Shaadi Abu Zarqa from Deheishe in the West Bank. As Hassan emphasizes, the refugees who arrive to the camps name their new space after their village. They also set out to recreate the alleys, streets, and, if resources permit, the architectural form of their own version of urban familiarity. Abu Zarqa offers perhaps the most compelling realization, which is that after years of living in Deheishe, he would not want to return to his "homeland." He would not be able to function as well as he does in the camp because he would have to begin his life all over again. Abu Zarqa's spontaneous realization evokes Henri Lefebvre's historicizing of space and Doreen Massey's process of the spatio-temporal construction to prove that the time between the rapid crossing of a national border and the forming of a new identity is adaptable. Although it may begin with national authorities and bilateral agreements in a normative framework, the individuals who are in motion, those who are actively negotiating their given parameters can take back a significant portion of autonomy in their daily lives. This does not occur every time, however, as it is highly dependent on individual circumstances and the greater political contexts. Nevertheless, as I have shown in my analyses of both *Contained Mobility* and *X-Mission*, the concept of critical knowledgescapes is a productive approach with which to begin understanding a complex matter such as refugee autonomy, for example. Critical knowledgescapes allow us to recognize dynamic temporality, to witness the creative representation of knowledge transfer, to reassert space as a socio-cultural process, and to reevaluate the power trajectories in all three

elements. In the case of *Contained Mobility* and *X-Mission*, the two film essays ultimately provide a new acoustic, textual, and visual form to longstanding perspectives on individuals labeled as “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” and “illegals.”

My final reflections currently point to the reexamination of the essay film. As mentioned earlier, the essay film can mediate or communicate among different domains in open-ended critical engagement. It deliberately segues between separate styles, tone, and/or modes of address as it communicates across different genres of filmmaking, between fiction and nonfiction, and between cinema and other media, such as painting, graphic design, and music, for example. There is an inherent dynamism to the essay form, which consequently allows the essay film to challenge enduring perspectives. However, it appears as if the specificity of the origin of the essay (and the essay film) is not as important as recognizing that its mode, the essayistic, is what drives it. The dialogic nature, such as the address to a viewer or to an audience, and its refusal of conclusions, are the elements that give the essay film an “in” when depicting an issue that is still in flux. One such issue, the migrant experience as we have constructed it in the late twentieth and in the early twenty-first centuries, needs new articulation because it has still not become a fully accepted element of our social fabric. The work that I have put forth here serves as a crucial first step. I have offered three different elements, by way of statist normativity, by way of dis-identification, and by way of critical knowledgescapes, that identify and historicize the progression between standardized perception of cross-border movement and the complexity that results out of such an approach. The three models lay the groundwork for future reconceptualization of cross-border movement, one that will begin with a recognition of refugee autonomy.

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