

Zamakan: Towards a contrapuntal image

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1981: Mohamad Tawfic shoots the film *Yaumyeat Mukatel* (The Everyday Life of a Fighter) about the Palestinian Fedayeen in South Lebanon.

1982: Israel invades Lebanon. Tawfic is stuck in Damascus, while his daughter, wife and the unfinished film are besieged in Beirut. In a daydream, Tawfic sees the film spools flying through the air and landing in a dumpster.

2018: Tawfic's apartment in Birkerød (a suburb of Copenhagen, Denmark).

He shows us the only remains from the film. The behind-the-scenes photos.

1996: The behind-the-scenes photos were developed in Birkerød where the family arrives, after Damascus, Tunis...

We assume that the original film got destroyed.

2018, we are shooting the video installation *Zamakan* (*TimeSpace*) in Copenhagen.¹ The title *Zamakan* is an abbreviation of the Arabic words Zaman = Time and Makan = Space, conflating the two together creating TimeSpace. While working on the film we were inspired by the Sufi-scholar Ibn Arabi's famous saying that "time is fluid space, and space is frozen time", to explore the following questions: How to understand "zamakan" as an experience of time, in which multiple different space-times can exist at the same time? And how to create a digital image that enables a multiplicity of space-times to exist within the same frame?

In *Zamakan*, we explore concepts of affect, memory and time, through the development of a two-channel video installation that encompasses experiences of heterogeneous space-times in the same image. The project was made through the

1 *Zamakan* (*TimeSpace*), two channel video installation 35,30 min. 2019.

Participants: Ayman Abu el Hayja, Samira Abdel Hassan, Rania Tawfic, Mohamed Tawfic, Suleiman Juni, Walid Mezian, Abbas Mroueh, Daniela Agostinho & Ivan-Asen Mladenov.

Sound: Nanna Hansen & Arendse Krabbe; Director of Photography: Talib Rasmussen; Camera Assistant: Ivan-Asen Mladenov; Logistic: Tomas Pocius; Producer assistant: Daniela Agostinho; Research: Abbas Mroueh; Archive material: Mohamed Tawfic, Ayman Abu el Hayja and Samira Abdel Hassan personal archives. Directed and produced by Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld & Amr Hatem, with the support of the Danish Art Council and the Mads Øvlisen postdoc stipends for practice based artistic research.

cultural venue and café Sorte Firkant (Black Square), which we co-initiated in 2016, and in collaboration with filmmakers, writers, cultural producers from Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, who came to Denmark between the 1980s and 2015, and who are all part of a larger informal network around Sorte Firkant. The lives of the participants, who span different generations and different countries of origin, do not necessarily have anything in common before they arrived in Copenhagen. Many of them were part of the Arab left and participated in the Palestinian struggle. Many of the participants are cultural producers, they have their photographs, books, films, paintings and letters, but their work has been ignored within the Danish art context. They never received arts funding in Denmark, since, what they were told is that their work does not cater to a “Danish audience”. *Zamakan* is not lamenting that fact, but rather an attempt to explore how their works, memories and personal archives are relevant to a plurality of cultures and collective memories across borders, and how their personal archives might contribute to expand what is commonly understood as “Danish” collective memory.

Fig. 14.1: *Hands*. Stills from *Zamakan (TimeSpace)*. Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Amr Hatem, 2019.



While we were researching for the project, some of the participants voiced experiences of affective encounters in Denmark, which made a sensation from the country of departure come alive in the present sensation. This incidence, when affect enables a past sensation to unfold in the present, creates a possibility of two (or more) different temporalities to exist within the same sensation (Deleuze 1973). We term this experience “affect’s time”. Affect’s time can both be seen as a glitch to normative experiences of time, while at the same time marks a wandering in time that connects different space-times – what we situate with Edward Said as

contrapuntal. According to Said, who borrow the term from music, the contrapuntal is an awareness of plurality of vision privileged to exiles, which gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, in which new and old environments are occurring together (Said 2001: 148). As the video unfolds, their life paths overlap and intermingle, creating a relational ciné-geography (Eshun/Gray 2011a) and choreography that cuts across time, national boundaries and forms points of resistance.

In this essay we draw on our work with the video installation in order to speculate what we might call the *contrapuntal image* that *Zamakan* gives rise to. As this volume illustrates, the postmigrant condition does not refer to what society becomes *after* migration, but rather refers to how societies are fundamentally shaped by earlier and ongoing migration movements (Schramm/Petersen/Moslund et al. 2019). Moreover, the term postmigration, in particular how it was conceived by contemporary art productions of the ‘postmigrant theatre’ at Ballhaus Naunynstraße and the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, is meant to press against the othering of people of colour and people with migrant experiences, to instead acknowledge their creative practices in all their plurality and how these enrich societies’ cultural life. Revisiting our work with *Zamakan*, it becomes apparent that the *contrapuntal image* also, and more importantly, forms a certain image in which the image in itself enfolds the line of flight, the route of migration, in its very materiality and in the means of production. It is not only an image *about* migration. It is not only a question of representation, but rather a question of conceiving filmic techniques, and milieus of enunciation, in which the image of migration is dissociated from its current representation in society and begins to form other affective assemblages, other modes of production, to become the very condition for the cinematographic image, which is always already a *movement image* (Deleuze 2009). Rather than a theme or object of representation, migration becomes the very materiality from which image-making is realizable. The *contrapuntal image*, then, is not an image about migrants, migration and postmigrant societies; but an image in which migration is its very material condition of imagination, production and circulation².

The *contrapuntal image* suggests a temporal complexity of overlapping narratives and generations, in which “newcomers”³ look at older generations’ archives

2 We are aware of T.J. Demos’ *The Migrant Image* (2013), an comprehensive and in-depth investigation of the effects that globalization and migration has had on contemporary artistic practice. Many of the art works he engages have been foundational to our thinking and practice, yet, what we want to advance with the contrapuntal image is how those structures comes to operate on the very level of the image in itself – its textures, its means of productions, its infrastructures.

3 We use the term “newcomers” to highlight the fact that many of the participants in the video arrived to Denmark in different times: some arrived in the 1980s / 1990s (first war in Iraq, Lebanese Civil War) some arrived in 2000s (with the invasion of Iraq) and some arrived in 2011- 2015

creating overlapping narratives that carry the previous generations and experiences within the same image. While the image of the migrant and migration that we are presented with in the news, in Denmark, are spectacular and rather “loud”, but void of human experiences, the *contrapuntal image* we suggest is *quiet* and *quotidian*, *tacit*, and *transient*. The *contrapuntal image* encompasses three or more different space times in the same image, it establishes a past that does not long for a past that one cannot return to but opens up to a futurity: an awareness that the future from hereon will be different. The *contrapuntal image* also suggests that migration is not unidirectional and geared towards a final destination, but rather that it is open ended, depending on the contingencies and urgencies intervening in our everyday lives. Finally, the *contrapuntal image* is post-production, it circulates within a different form of distribution that creates the very affective infrastructures that sustain it, and that enable us to live out the present as we want to see in the future.

To further elaborate this proposition, we will unfold and discuss five scenes from the installation that are closely connected to the different locations in which they are filmed:

- 1) Nordvest: The taste of yoghurt
- 2) Birkerød: The photos that remain
- 3) Contrapuntal Images: the quiet and quotidian
- 4) Telle (hill): Where do we go from here?
- 5) Sorte Firkant: Infrastructures for the Present’s Past-Futures

Nordvest: The taste of yoghurt

Ayman Abu el Hayja: I remember that the first incident that happened to me in that bright room was when they brought us food.

We were hungry, so they brought us yoghurt, I remember.

I took the yoghurt tub and ate the first spoon

and I was shocked.

The yoghurt was sweet.

Samira Abdel Hassan: Yes, the yoghurt here is sweet, it has fruits, unlike the one we have”

Ayman: Yes, the yoghurt we know is sourish and a bit salty.

(following the Arab spring and the war in Syria). At the same time, it is an attempt to bypass the political and media discourse that is centered around generational fixities of “first-generation, second-generation and third generations” as well as “new Danes”.

We are not used to yogurt with fruits.
 At that moment, I asked myself, why was I shocked?
 That means that the taste already existed on my tongue.
 Before tasting the spoon of yoghurt,
 the memory of the taste already exists on my tongue, right?
 So, the taste of the yoghurt I am eating should conform with the one already existing in my mind.
 Then I noticed that my perception of the world is pre-constructed in my mind.
 I understand the world through the images already constructed in my mind,
 if the image does not match then there is something wrong.
 Yet, practically the world does not exist only in my mind.
 the world exists outside of it
 So, this insight helped me a lot on later on
 It changed my understanding of my own life and the world, so I became less judgmental
 I became more attentive to the images I am perceiving
 Is it my cognitive image of a person I am seeing?
 or is it the person in front of me? (Zamakan, Dirckinck-Holmfeld/Hatem sec. 00:00 – 03:45)

In the opening scene of *Zamakan*, Ayman Abu el Hayja and Samira Abdel Hassan are sitting in their living room in Nordvest. Ayman recounts his initial encounter with the taste of sweet Danish yoghurt upon arriving at Sandholm refugee camp, outside Copenhagen in 1980s. This incident opens up to the cosmology of the *contrapuntal image* that *Zamakan* is trying to grapple with. As he recounts, the taste produced a shock or affective encounter in him, which created a possibility of different times coexisting within the same moment, what we call “affect’s time” (Dirckinck-Holmfeld 2015: 70). Within the studies of affect and time there can grossly be said to exist two philosophical traditions, one that pertain to a Deleuze-, Bergson-, Spinoza-, Leibniz- understanding of affect and time as an infinite enfoldment of sensations that are pre-personal and can open up to a multiplicity of spacetimes⁴, in the other, time and affect are understood as measurable neural firings, propelled by Helmholtz, Herta Strum, Benjamin Libet’s neurophysiological definition of a “short delay”, or missing half second between the registration of an affect and the cognitive response (Angerer/Bösel/Ott 2014: 10). What we term “affect’s time”, is siding more with the Deleuzian understanding of affect and time in which the affective encounter opens up to a multiplicity of space-times to ex-

4 Here the influence from Ibn Arabi on Leibniz is something that would be interesting to further explore in relation to the contrapuntal image, see also Laura U. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity* (2010).

ist within the same split of a second. In his reading of Marcel Proust, Deleuze uses the famous instance where the narrator takes a bite of the madeleine-cake to speculate about involuntary memory. In involuntary memory the sensation that unfolds in the present is not a *representation* of the past, but it is the thing in itself and its entire context that unfolds in the present sensation:

...it [the taste of madeleine-cake] internalizes context, it makes the past context inseparable from the present sensation. At the same time that the resemblance between the two moments is transcended in the direction of a more profound identity, the contiguity which belonged to the past moment is transcended in the direction of a more profound difference. Combray rises up again in the present sensation, in which its difference from the past sensation is internalized. (Deleuze 1973: 58-59)

Fig. 14.2: Stills from *Zamakan (TimeSpace)*. Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Amr Hatem, 2019.



Photos by Ayman Abou El Hayjar and Samira Abdel Hassan.

In a similar fashion, we ask, is it possible to understand Ayman's yoghurt sensation upon arriving in Denmark as enfolding the contexts of (Palestine, Syria, Lebanon) Levantian yoghurt? And that those contexts are being unfolded and re-folded in the taste of the Danish sweet yoghurt?

When we shot this scene for *Zamakan*, it became apparent that in Ayman's case it was not only those past sensations and contexts unfolding in the present sensation of sweet Danish yoghurt, as in the case of Proust's madelaine cake. The temporal collapse of those different sensations also enfolded a futurity: an awareness that the future from thereon would be different and that Ayman had to recalibrate

his entire perceptive system based on this affective encounter. To make himself open to a future to come.

As a consequence, the *contrapuntal image* encompasses three or more different space times in the same image. It establishes a past that does not long for a past that one cannot return to but opens up to a futurity: an awareness that the future from hereon will be different.

Birkerød: The photos that remain

Birkerød (a residential suburb of Copenhagen): filmmaker Mohamed Tawfic shares his archive: Tawfic is flipping through a series of still photographs – setting them in motion through the movement of his hands. Through the support of the two-channel installation in *Zamakan*, as one image leaves his hands, it appears on the second screen.

The images are from behind the scenes of a film that Tawfic shot in Lebanon in 1982: *Yaumyeat Mukatel* (The Everyday Life of a Fighter) about the Palestinian Fedayeen in Lebanon. The film follows four fedayeen from four different generations and registers their mundane, everyday lives to create a counter image to the predominant European perception of the Palestinian resistance at the time. When the film was almost finished, Israel besieged Beirut, Tawfic was stuck in Damascus while his wife and his daughter Rania Tawfic were besieged in Beirut. His wife tried to smuggle the film spools out of Beirut through friends, who in turn got rid of the spools when the Israelis got closer. In a daydream Mohamed Tawfic saw the film spools flying through the air and landing in a pile of trash. The only thing that remains are the still photographs that had been shot behind the scenes. The negative film migrated with the family from Beirut, to Damascus, to Tunisia and then only got developed in 1996 in the local photoshop in Birkerød, 14 years after they were taken.

Mohamed Tawfic's lost film can be said to form part of a larger global movement in the 1960s and 1970s, when filmmakers became part of the struggle for decolonisation and anti-imperialism, known as *Third Cinema* or militant cinema (Solanas/Getino 1973; Eshun/Gray 2011; Benfield 2011). In Third Cinema, the film is no longer a representation or documentation of a movement, but it becomes that movement in itself. The filmmaker joins the struggle and the camera becomes the weapon in the fight against imperialism and for decolonization. The militant image becomes matter and movement in itself. Similarly, Tawfic joined the fedayeen, he lived with them, yet his aim was not to show the armed struggle but the everyday life – the quiet and the quotidian life of the struggle. Another example within the history of third cinema is Jean-Luc Godard and Anne Marie Miéville's famous movie *Ici et Ailleurs* (*Here and Elsewhere*, 1976). In this film the filmmakers try to

come to terms with the footage they shot in the 1970s as part of the Dziga Vertov Group with Pierre Gorin. The Palestinian Liberation Organization in Jordan had commissioned the group to shoot the footage for the film *Jusqu'à la victoire* (Until Victory). Shortly after the footage for *Until Victory* was shot, the massacre known as Black September took place, in which many of the fedayeen filmed were either killed or expelled from Jordan to Lebanon. Here one could speculate the possible overlaps to the fedayeen filmed in Tawfic's film, which where the continuation of the struggle after it relocated from Jordan to Lebanon, and which again in 1982, the same time as the Tawfic's film was destroyed, were expelled from Lebanon to Tunisia. In *Ici et Ailleurs*, Godard and Miéville reflect on what to do with this footage of a movement abruptly killed. This led them to question both *the movement*, the resistance movement filmed, and also the filmic medium – the movement image – employed to capture this movement.

Twenty minutes into the film a group of five people walk around a camera demonstratively placed in the middle of the frame – as if they are workers on the assembly line. The voiceover states:

O.K., here the images can be seen all together.
 At the movies, this is impossible.
 One is obliged to see them separately one after the other
 Which results in this:
 But it is seen as such because in gact when one makes a film,
 Things really happen this way:
 Each time, one image ceases to replace the other.
 Each time the image after expels the image before and takes its place...
 Keeping of course more or less the memory of it.
 This is made possible because the image is moving...
 And the images don't come all together, but separately to inscribe themselves
 One after the other, on their support:
 Agfa, Kodak, Orvo, Gevaert...
 And on the whole, time has replaced space, speaks for it, or rather:
 Space has inscribed itself on the film in another form...
 Which is not a whole anymore, but a sum of traslations,
 A sum of feelings, which are forwarded,
 ... That is, the Time...
 ... and the film that is, on the whole, chain-work image...
 Of my double identity, space & time chained to each other...
 Like two workers on the assembly line
 Where each is at the same time the copy and the original of the other.
 (Godard/Miéville 1976m sec. 20.25 min.)

Godard compares the chain of images, of the machinic production, to workers on the assembly line, in which time and space and time are chained to each other. For *Zamakan* we re-enacted that scene from *Ici et Ailleurs*, using the stills from Tawfic's lost film instead, however we ended up not using the re-enactment scene in the final edit. During the editing, it became apparent that Tawfic's recounting of the story while browsing through the still images with his hands, created another relationship to the double movement of the movement image (resistance movement and the filmic mechanical movement), in which his hands become the driving engine animating the lost film back into motion. This was further articulated with the movement from one-channel to two-channel video installation in which one image would disappear in Tawfic's hand only to recur as a still image on the second screen.

Fig. 14.3: Stills from *Zamakan (TimeSpace)*. Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Amr Hatem, 2019.



Above left and right: Mohamed Tawfic showing stills from behind the scene of the film *Yaumyeat Mukatel*. Below left: A.Mroueh, A. Abou El Hayjar, S. Al Hassan, A. Krabbe, S. Juni and A. Hatem on the Telle (Hill) in Copenhagen. Below right: archive image from Tawfic's film *Yaumyeat Mukatel*.

What we would like to speculate here in regard to the concept of the *contrapuntal image* is that the image itself moves, not only one frame after the other, but in this case there are other movements going on simultaneously that are ingrained in the very texture and materiality of the image, opening up to a different distribution of time-space that is not chained to each other (as in the assembly line metaphor) but able to relate a multiplicity of spacetimes in the very texture of the image. In other words, the film is a document of a movement, but it also becomes a movement in itself through its line of flight, when the negatives migrate from Beirut, Da-

mascus, Tunis, Copenhagen. Similar to the yogurt sensation in Ayman's anecdote, is it possible that the line of flight is enfolded in the very texture of the photos themselves? That the different contexts that the photos have travelled through are ingrained in the very surface and texture of the image?

Here the concept of ciné-geography, as advanced by the Otholith Group and Kodwo Eshun and Ros Grey, is useful to consider how the contrapuntal image draws other relational geographies:

Ciné-geography designates situated cinecultural practices in an expanded sense, and the connections – individual, institutional, aesthetic and political – that link them transnationally to other situations of urgent struggle. It refers not just to individual films but also to the new modes of production, exhibition, distribution, pedagogy and training made possible by forms of political organisation and affiliation. A critical component is the invention of discursive platforms such as gatherings, meetings, festivals, screenings, classes and groups founded by a range of students, activists, workers, film-makers, artists, critics, editors, teachers and many others at decisive moments in order to mobilise collective strategies that may have been evolving for some time. It includes the speeches, statements, essays, poems, declarations, manifestos and anthologies in which the aspirations of this transnational network of affiliated movements were clarified and articulated. And it refers to the medial circuits of dissemination through which these texts and films travelled and were (mis)translated in order to multiply the ways and places in which cinema could be 'instrumentalised', to use Getino's term, as a tool of radical social change in processes of decolonisation and revolution. Lastly, the term ciné-geography designates the afterlives of the militant image, the digital platforms, formats, applications, files, torrents and burns through which it continues to circulate as a fourth-, fifth- and sixth-generation travelling image; a fragmented sonimage that operates as a material index of social relations, capable, at unexpected moments and in tangential ways, of re-animating intense moments of upheaval. (Eshun/Gray 2011: 1-2)

Ciné-geography becomes useful to think with in relation to the *contrapuntal image* in the way in which the still photographs (that are the only remains) forms a cine-geography that connects the line of flight, ---Beirut, Damascus, Tunis, Birkørød --- in the same image. In the absence of distribution those images are put into motion again in Copenhagen, by connecting the personal archives/ memories of other Arab diaspora – as well as other migrant groups in Denmark that connect their archives to the chain of images. Here it is important to note that Ayman joined the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon before arriving in Denmark and could possibly had been one of the people portrayed in Tawfic's film. But the cine-geography also extends to the audiences, who bring their own archives to the screen. When we showed this scene at the conference 'The Postmigrant Condi-

tion: Art, Culture and Politics in Contemporary Europe', taking place in Odense in November 2018, a member of the audiences, recounted how she experienced the double channel effect as one screen referred to the actual film while the other was playing out the memory of that film. In addition to the two screens she projected a third screen onto the screen which were her personal archives of filmmakers in Germany that she had been interviewing – that were montaged onto the film⁵. It is that simultaneity of different conflated geographies that we call the *contrapuntal image*.

The contrapuntal image: The quiet and the quotidian

While we will return to how the *contrapuntal image* forms new infrastructures of shared histories and form communities we find it important for a moment to pause on the fact that Tawfic's filmic practice can be seen as forming part of the militant cinema/third cinema movement, but he chose to make a film about the fedayeen's everyday life, against the grain of the popular image of militancy at the time. As he explains, no gunshot was heard in the film. It was very much about the fedayeen's quiet and quotidian life and their relationships with their families, children, nature etc. In *Listening to Images*, media scholar Tina Campt propels us to listen to difference, to attune to the lower frequencies of migrant archives of Blacks in diaspora. Her aim is "to animate the recalcitrant affects of quiet as an undervalued lower range of quotidian audibility" (Campt 2017: 4). Asking "what is the relationship between the quiet and the quotidian?" (Ibid.: 4), Campt defines the terms as a reference to something unspoken or "unsaid, unremarked, unrecognised or overlooked. They name practices that are pervasive and ever-present yet occluded by their seeming absence or erasure in repetition, routine, or internalisation. Yet the quotidian is not equivalent to passive everyday acts, and quiet is not an absence of articulation or utterance. Quiet is a modality that surrounds and infuses sound with impact and affect, which creates the possibility for it to register as meaningful" (ibid.: 4). Campt's understanding of the quotidian as a practice, a practice honed by the dispossessed in the struggle to create possibility within the constraints of everyday life, is particularly interesting in relation to our work with *Zamakan* on several levels. To listen to images is once a description and a method, it designates a method of recalibrating one's perceptive system to attune to what we do not see in the image, or what is registered by the juxtaposition of images and archives. That haptic temporality is engrained in the *contrapuntal image* as we have shown, and being brought alive again through touch, through

5 We apologies for not being able to recall the name of the conference member.

browsing through the images. Yet there are other ways in which *Zamakan* also attest to the quiet and the quotidian life being lived in the suburbs of Copenhagen.

Mohamed Tawfic's film was called the everyday life of the fighter, and wanted to move away from the loud and rather spectacular image of the fedayeen, at the time, but there are certain ways in which his own practice as a filmmaker while being displaced from Baghdad, to Beirut, to Damascus, to Tunis, to Copenhagen has also been dissociated from the movement or struggle of which he formed part and moved towards registering the everyday life in Birkerød, the changes of seasons, the relationship to the lake. The everyday life of listening to the music of Uhm Khalthoum on the TV set in Birkerød. Here sound plays an important role in creating the contrapuntal relationship between different time-spaces that are conflated in the same moment. The method, Edward Said borrows from music, is exercised by excellence in the traditional Arabic music of maqam – that in itself is a *bending of time*⁶ and place and of polyrhythms, in which an awareness of two or more tunes collide at the same time. There is something in the voice, or timbre, of Ayman and Samira speaking that in itself might be the most powerful actant of the video, which is not translatable into this essay, but which was very much sensed in the room, while filming. *Zamakan* is an attempt to listen to the lower frequencies of migration, to attune to the everyday life stories of participants, as it unfolds in their apartments in Birkerød and Nordvest. Those silences and lower frequencies are not void of sound and meaning but is contrary to the rather “loud” and spectacular media image of migration politics as it is currently being played out in Danish media. What happens instead if we attune to the micro affects, the boiling of water on a stove, the everyday acts of walking around the lake?

Telle: Where do we go from here?

In the final scene of the video the group, comprised of the crew and cast in the film, is sitting at the “telle” (hill) overlooking the lakes in the city centre of Copenhagen. The group is discussing the current political situation in European Union, where

6 In 2019 Lebanese percussionist Khaled Yassine curated a musical program at Sorte Firkant called *Bending Time*, presenting his own as well as other artists' musical projects inspired by the rhythmic traditions of the Arab peninsula, the poly-rhythms found in the area and the unique swing feel, Yassine's project explores micro-time as a tool to alter grooves through bending their subdivisions where sextuplets and quintuplets become the main denominator of the grooves as opposed to the common 16th and triplet subdivisions. On the melodic and the harmonic side, the project dives into micro-tonal Arabic music and experiments with the unlimited/unexplored harmonic possibilities that can be developed out of it. Texturally, electronically processing traditional instruments (oud, bouzouk, Arabic percussions) and the use of synths (micro-tonal) constitutes the sonic palette of the project.

right wing parties are on the rise. The conclusion is presented as a joke. In 30-40 years from now, if the right-wing gains power, what should we do? – the idea is to buy a submarine and go to the nearest safest place, which is Greece, since “people have hair on their backs, and where people are brown” (Dirckinck-Holmfeld/Hatem 2019: 32,57 min). The group continues to discuss whether or not they should bring Katrine (the co-director), who is not present in the image but behind the camera, since she is white and could easily pass within the nationalist agenda. But since she is married to an Arab, they agree to bring her as well since she might be considered a traitor.

While editing the film, the extreme right in Denmark were running for the elections, burning the Quran on the square in front of the café Sorte Firkant, from where the film was produced. What in the film is presented as a joke of a possible future, suddenly became accelerated in the present. Here again the concept of cine-geography becomes useful to think with in that migration is not unidirectional and geared towards one final destination: it is not a movement from South to North, and then ending (t)here, but a continuous and relational process. The *contrapuntal image* is perceptible to the contingencies and urgencies intervening in our everyday lives.

Sorte Firkant: Infrastructures for the present's past-futures

Returning to how the *contrapuntal image* forms new networks of shared histories and community we want to end this essay by giving an account of the platform through which the video installation was produced and shown – Sorte Firkant. Motivated by the question: how to create other affective infrastructures for working on the cultural memory of Arab diaspora in Denmark, and to create other infrastructures for culture from the Arab world and beyond, we co-founded Sorte Firkant in 2016. Sorte Firkant is a café and cultural venue in Nørrebro, Copenhagen, in the most densely populated and diverse neighbourhood in Denmark. Since its inception Sorte Firkant has become a meeting point for people from various different backgrounds and professions, incl. artists, cultural workers and regulars whose work are not easy to situate within the current normative frames that is governing the Danish public. The name of the venue Sorte Firkant (meaning the black square) is a reference to the historical, popular nickname for Blågårdplads and the area around, where the venue is located. Sorte Firkant wants to work on the history of the neighbourhood, while acknowledging the square's historical and cultural practices and stigmas the aim is to open up to the possibilities of different spaces to exist within the same space. Sorte Firkant is an attempt to create infrastructures where artists and people from all walks of life can come together and develop their work collectively or individually; a space for sharing work and

experiences; a platform where to discuss your work in an intimate café-setting and to take that work further to the public. Sorte Firkant is inspired by its sister venue, the cabaret theatre in Beirut, Metro Al Madina, founded in 2011⁷. Metro Al Madina has created a self-sustainable cultural platform, which is not depending on funding, but capable of producing high quality and critical cabaret shows that reinvent and re-enact popular culture from the Arab region in newfound and subversive forms. This model depends on the development of a relationship to an audience that is willing to come back.

Sorte Firkant's café setting presents a venue where you do not need to be invited or inaugurated within the art world to feel welcome. The intimate space makes it possible to attract various peoples across generational-, cultural- and socio-economic backgrounds. *Zamakan* was produced within this community of people who are both in front and behind the camera.

The *contrapuntal image* in this context refers to that it is not a question of representation. It is no longer a question of making art that represents migrant community or where migration is addressed as a theme – rather, and like time, it is the interiority in which we move and change (Deleuze 1989) – but it is also dislocating and detouring migrant forms of representations expanding and pushing the limitations of the current hegemonic political climate. And it is about creating the infrastructures or what we might situate with visual culture and contemporary art theorist Irit Rogoff as “relational geography” in which objectivities and subjectivities that may appear antagonistic or isolated are brought together through a practice of mapping that acknowledges its own partiality as well as each constitutive part of the map's singularity. Rather than conventional geography, Rogoff reminds us, relational geography does not operate from

a single principle that maps everything in an outward-bound motion with itself at the centre. Instead, it is cumulative, it lurches sideways, it is constructed out of chance meetings in cafés, of shared reading groups at universities, of childhood deprivations that could speak to one another, of snatches of music on transistor radios, of intense rages, of glimmers of hope offered by ideas that enabled imagining a better world. (Rogoff 2003: 56)

Tina Campt calls them “everyday practices of refusal” (Campt 2017:4), Stefano Harney and Fred Moten call them “the undercommons” (Harney/Moten 2013: 28 ff.), what they have in common is that they advance a futurity that is capable of living out the present as the future which has not happened but must. Therefore, moving away from art about migration to art where migrants are central to the process of artistic creation on all levels (conceptual, aesthetical, affective and

7 Metro al Madina was founded in 2011 by artist Hisham Jaber and friends.

technically), is necessary to arrive to an art of an always-already transformed and mixed social reality – an art of a plural society.

The ingredients foundational to creating such infrastructures, in the case of *Sorte Firkant* has been pluralism and affect. Pluralism as put forward by Chantal Mouffe's work on agonistic pluralism. Even though her concept of agonistic pluralism was tailored for the field of democratic politics, her thoughts have been opted by artistic and social practices. Acknowledging the impossibility of consensus by deliberation, Mouffe suggests a distinction between what is politics and what is political. By political she refers to the ontological dimension within politics. i.e. the basis that our political acts are based upon. Since, for Mouffe, antagonism is constitutional of the political, consensus must necessarily be made on the ethico-political standards. Beyond this consensus, Mouffe calls to transform antagonism into agonism and therefore transforming enmity into adversarial relations. Hence it is only by understanding the political in its antagonistic dimension and the contingent nature of any type of social order "that one can grasp the hegemonic struggle which characterises democratic politics, (...) in which artistic practices can play a crucial role" (Mouffe 2007: 1-2).

Secondly, and related, affect plays a crucial role in creating experiences that communicate through the sensorial experiences, rather than rational deliberation. Since its inception *Sorte Firkant* has hosted and organised multiplicity of events ranging from book launches, poetry nights, exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, fashion shows, performances, workshops, round tables and food events, that communicate through taste, music, visuals, concepts and ambience. It is through those affective encounters, that we are able to adjust and modify our perceptive and normative system and make us open for a future to come.

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