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## Photographic Engagements, Belonging and Affective Encounters in Contemporary Photography

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ERIKA LARSSON is a theorist of Visual Culture and *Photographic Engagements* is her doctoral thesis in the subject. In 2011, she received a fellowship grant from the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. In addition to her research in Turkey she has a Bachelors from Goldsmiths, University of London and she has also lived and taught for some years in Japan. Today, she lives in Lund and lectures at the Department of Art History and Visual Culture at Lund University.

This book explores the notion of belonging in contemporary photography in Turkey and Sweden. Throughout the investigation, Erika Larsson uses the term *engaging* to bring together a range of theoretical perspectives in order to move beyond a representational take on photography. In so doing, her aim is to approach particular photographic works as affective, embodied, and situated interactions or acts. Through the lens of these theoretical perspectives, she explores a number of different photographic projects that in one way or another deal with the notion of belonging.

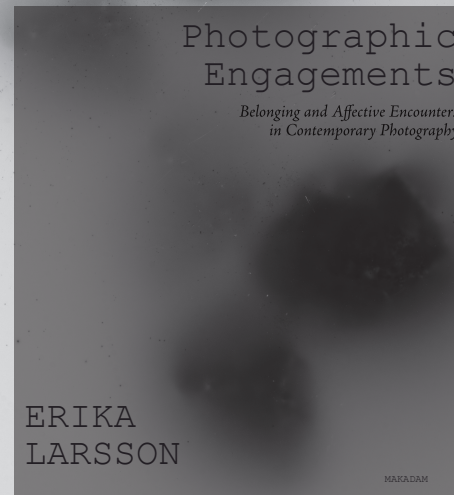
Larsson argues that affective and embodied perspectives are significant and often overlooked both in terms of contemporary photography and theoretical discussions around belonging. In bringing these two themes together, the explorations reveal previously unforeseen aspects of how experiences of belonging are shaped, felt, and negotiated through contemporary photography.

In order to bring close attention to certain photographic works and how they function within particular situated space, Larsson focuses on works from the areas in and around Sweden and Turkey, but the discussion also reflects on the wider question of European experiences of belonging.

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Cover: Lina Selander, *Lenin's Lamp Glows in the Peasant's Hut*, 2011.  
Courtesy of the artist.



*Photographic Engagements*



*For Luca*

# Photographic Engagements

Belonging and Affective Encounters  
in Contemporary Photography

ERIKA LARSSON

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*Introduction*

## Beginning to Tread the Path

### Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this book is twofold. Firstly, it is to investigate the notion of belonging in contemporary photography in Turkey and Sweden. Secondly, it seeks to make a contribution to a theoretical approach to contemporary photography that includes its affective, situated and embodied aspects. In the discussions and analyses to follow, *belonging* is used as a term that addresses the processes and experiences through which human and non-human relations are generated and experienced. Using the term *belonging* rather than *identity* signals a deliberate move away from identity politics. In my discussions, I turn instead towards exploring belonging as emotional and physical attachment, as well as considering the materiality of situated spaces in which belonging is created and experienced. As much of the book will go on to show, these processes and experiences are embodied and affective as much as conceptual and linguistic. A major premise of the investigation is that while a great deal has been written on the subject of belonging and identity in a range of academic fields, what is less developed is a visually centred view on these subjects. By “visually centred” I do not simply refer to a perspective that focuses on images and image production. Rather, my focus remains with vision as an embodied human sense, as opposed to a conceptual and linguistic approach. Both in terms of photography theory and the notion of belonging, the aim is to find inspiration from and develop further, those theories that, as W.J. T. Mitchell describes, “do not begin with the assumption that language is paradigmatic for meaning”.<sup>1</sup>

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1. W.J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: Uni-

The notion of *engaging* is used throughout the book to bring together a range of different theoretical perspectives that all share a non-representational take on photography, and that in one way or another approach photographic productions as affective, embodied and situated interactions or acts. The term non-representational is borrowed from Nigel Thrift and I will explain further below what I mean by this term.<sup>2</sup> While continuing to argue for the value of a non-representational approach to photography, my aim is not to say that this perspective is truer, or even necessarily more valid, than other theoretical approaches that have, until recently, been more common in analysing photography. Rather, the suggestion is that much of the existing theoretical toolbox limits perception to certain aspects of how photographs function in particular circumstances. I argue that building on a non-representational approach, and implementing theories that use this perspective in new ways, create the possibility of making visible and perceptible previously underappreciated aspects of such processes of engagement.

## Background

The investigation that ultimately resulted in this book began in Istanbul in 2010. During the first two years of the project, I researched the history of photography in Turkey and explored how contemporary photographers in that country, as well as in the bordering areas, deal with the notion of belonging in their work. As the research progressed, I started to pay attention to interesting relationships – differences and similarities – between Sweden, where I am based, and Turkey. I thus ended up working with empirical material from two separate geographic areas, looking for parallels and contrasts in how photographic practices in these two geographically distant parts of Europe and its bordering areas relate to matters of cultural identity and belonging. I found that many of the works and discussions around them in both Turkey and Sweden had in common the perspective of being European peripheral areas. In different ways, many of the works from both contexts could be seen to explore the historical, social, cultural,

and political aspects of the European borderland and European (non-)belonging – something that returns as a sub-theme in the book.

In terms of time period, my focus was on recent contemporary photography. As I needed a more specific demarcation, and found that most of the works I came to look at more closely were all made after 2005, I decided to delimit my investigation to the time period 2005–2015, thus marking off an even decade. This time period came to include major political, economic and cultural transformation in these areas, much of which I knew nothing about when I started in 2010. Turkey has seen a pro-Islamic government gradually take over and transform the country through increasingly authoritarian measures after decades-long secular rule. Furthermore, the consequences of the so-called “Arab Spring” and the long-lasting conflicts around the border areas of Turkey, had a continuous impact on the making and breaking of experiences of belonging in the area. Sweden, meanwhile, in part as a consequence of these and other conflicts, saw an increasing numbers of migrants crossing its borders. As in several other European countries, this time period has been marked by the increasing influence of political parties and organisations with an anti-immigration agenda. In both Turkey and Sweden, global and local forces have contributed to shifting the environment in which photography is practiced. The influence of such events on photographic practice on the one hand, and the shaping of events through photographic practice on the other, inevitably became part of the book’s discussion and analyses.

The decade of 2005–15 was also a time of continued rapid technological transformation, which greatly influenced photographic practices. The proliferation of digital technologies, social media, citizen photography and vernacular aesthetics fundamentally transformed the ways in which photographs are taken, distributed, shared and perceived. In parallel, or as a consequence, interest and financial support for commissioned documentary photography began to severely diminish. As a result, many photographers and artists working with photography developed new strategies to maintain and expand possibilities for – and make clear the relevance of – their work. One such strategy can be seen in the move away from explorations of the medium itself, which has been a preoccupation of many artists, photographers, and theorists for several decades, and which at times has risked rendering the photograph socially irrelevant. Today, as art historian Nathalie Herschdorfer explains, many “photographers are looking for a new form of *engagement*, knowing that it is often impossible

versity of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 12.

2. N.J. Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2008).

to document what is happening”.<sup>3</sup> Leaving behind the intention of representing events or situations, or revealing the impossibility of doing so, artists and photographers often found themselves engaging physically and emotionally in the spaces where conflicts, interactions and differences are played out.<sup>4</sup> As will be explored further, this involves not just a change in the technical approach to a subject, or its visible result, but also entails a shift in sensibility toward the medium and its potential. At the same time, the presence and influence of photography in the art world has continuously increased during this time, with new photography galleries continuously opening, and museums dedicating large parts of their programmes to showing photographs from different times, places and areas of life.

It was within the context of this ongoing technological, political, economic, and cultural transformation that I came to explore how experiences of belonging are shaped, felt, and negotiated through contemporary photography. In relation to these practices, my aim has been to take into account the political, cultural and material particularities of their making and experience. Although identity and belonging in relation to cultural productions are prominent topics in academic discussions as well as in artistic and social practices, analyses of their function often remain with a generalising, global perspective that fails to take into account the situated and incarnated aspects of these phenomena. While inarguably connected to political, economic and cultural forces that circulate globally, other than in theory, globalised phenomena of belonging and identity can never be found in this abstract space of global circulation. On the contrary, as I will continue to explore in relation to particular works throughout the book, they are always incarnated in particular places with distinct political and cultural contexts as well as experienced through singular bodies and materialities.

Speaking more generally of the relationship between contemporary pho-

tography and politics, film studies scholar Imre Szeman and artist and photographer Maria Whiteman suggest how photography can be seen as “a necessary visual component to a politics which today is always already carried out in circumstances of extreme visibility”.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the discussions in this book, I see these circumstances as the backdrop against which the particular analyses are carried out. It is within and against this extreme visibility – be it in the shape of visualising technologies used within border controls, historical photography archives, the image saturation of contemporary online and offline media, or the inner “planted images” through which we understand and experience the world around us – that the works and practices in question are brought into view.<sup>6</sup> As such, even when the practices remain within the walls of the museum or gallery, they are understood in relation to a wider political arena, in which the works are not only seen as reflections or representations of a politics that takes place elsewhere, but are themselves a way of making politics.<sup>7</sup> This is perhaps more evident in those practices that take the Internet or public space as the scene of their activity. In all cases, however, what is at stake is never an isolated event in which a certain experience of belonging is understood or represented. Rather, the particular practices that I analyse are seen as engagements within a wider local, national or global political space, which the practices themselves directly affect and are affected by.

3. Nathalie Herschdorfer, *Afterwards: Contemporary Photography Confronting the Past* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011), p. 17 (my emphasis).

4. Fred Ritchin similarly describes how “[i]n both old and new arenas, photographers are redefining their roles, experimenting with new narratives and strategies of dissemination while attempting to broaden the photographic enterprise even further. Less focused on the priorities of the mainstream press, they employ strategies that may be more arcane and are often more complex, offering to *engage* the reader differently”. Fred Ritchin, *Bending the Frame: Photojournalism, Documentary, and the Citizen* (New York: Aperture, 2013), p. 40 (my emphasis).

5. Imre Szeman and Maria Whiteman, “The Big Picture: On the Politics of Contemporary Photography”, *Third Text*, 23/5, 2009, p. 553.

6. The term “planted images” is used by Ariella Azoulay in *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York & Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books / The MIT Press, 2008).

7. As becomes clear in the theories that I begin to outline below, aesthetics and politics are not seen as separate phenomena, but, on the contrary, as two inextricably intertwined aspects of how the rules, codes, laws and categories that structure political life are created, negotiated and experienced through everyday, affective and embodied engagements. As politics, understood as the institutions and practices that create a certain order, inevitably influence aesthetic practices that in different ways speak back to this politics, the practices in question are seen as also constitutive, in a longer time frame, of this wider politics. See for example Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).



## Demarcations

In relation to photographic practices, a number of connections and contrasts between the two geographic focus areas became increasingly apparent during my research – the particularities and significance of which will be brought out further throughout the discussion. In general, I found that in both regions, photographers, artists, and others engaging with photography use strategies connected to globally circulating trends. For example, a number of artists work with photography through archival practices in order to address the notion of belonging from a historical perspective. Also, many photographers can be seen to direct their cameras, some using the visualising potential of large format technology, to the material aspects of situated places in which belongings are created and negotiated. Yet others are using a multimedia approach that includes photography in order to bring out the “messiness” of embodied reality in relation to matters of belonging. Finally, photographers, artists, and activists alike can be seen to turn to the power of digital technologies in using photography to bring people together and/or engage people for different causes. What unites many of these practices is a particular attention to the affective, visceral and situated aspects of how photography can be used to engage with matters of belonging.

While both geographical sites are affected by global events and trends, and are connected historically, politically and culturally, there are inevitably significant differences between these areas as well. For example, in relation to the practices analysed, political perspectives pervade cultural practices in the highly politicised and increasingly polarised and tense situation in Turkey. Sweden, too, has been increasingly affected by world events. However, more effort has been required to find works that relate to questions of belonging from a political, rather than existential or philosophical, perspective, as the political is still less pervasive within the cultural field. While my focus was on practices in these two nations, in my investigation I also wanted to move beyond a perspective on national borders and include the significance of intertwining histories as well as projects and imaginations of belonging beyond the national. As such, I also at times deliberately include works from, and works that relate to, areas close to but beyond the national boundaries of Turkey and Sweden.

As mentioned, while focusing on particular explorations of belonging in these geographic areas, what also came to be at stake was a wider question of European experiences of belonging and how these have been transformed

during the period 2005–2015. Turkey is often discussed in both academic and other contexts as a place on the border between East and West, between Europe and Asia, in which European identities have been both moulded and contrasted for centuries. In contrast, Sweden is rarely discussed in terms of being a borderland to Europe, or even “semi-peripheral” to the West in general.<sup>8</sup> Rather, when Sweden is discussed in terms of the social or cultural phenomena that it harbours, the context is usually either exclusively national or otherwise as part of a generalising notion of Europe or the West. The period of time on which this discussion focuses has seen an increasing shift away from the West when it comes to the art world and in other areas of global culture (as well as economics).<sup>9</sup> While theory in part has followed this movement, what rarely come into focus are the internal divergences of European identity formations. From this perspective, Sweden and its bordering areas, as much as Turkey, including also its Eastern and Southern bordering regions, are seen as places in which European senses of belonging are equally contested, defended and/or recreated.

As I have described, the discussion makes use of and combines a range of theories that from different perspectives and in differing ways bring out the affective, embodied and situated aspects of the photographic practices in question. The practices are selected on the basis of how much they benefit from such theoretical approaches. Throughout my research, I have come across a number of practices that deal with the theme of belonging in the geographical areas concerned, but in relation to which other theoretical approaches would be more fruitful. Such cases have been left out of the present exploration in order for them to be analysed elsewhere in ways that will do them justice. In terms

8. “Semi-peripheral” or “Semi-European” is used by Anne Ring Petersen to talk about the Nordic countries in her “Global Art History: A View from the North”, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 7/0, 2015. Petersen here (p. 3) quotes Charlotte Bydler: “The Nordic countries form a region in Europe that often does not quite count as properly European. Few European art- historical features are found in the periods of which they are generally thought to be a part.”

9. This movement can be found, for example, in the project *The Former West*, a transnational research, education, publishing, and exhibition project in the field of contemporary art and theory. The project describes a search for ways of “formerizing the persistently hegemonic conjuncture that is ‘the West’; to be able instead to simply refer to ‘the west’, and with it, suggest the possibility of producing new constellations, another world, other worldings”. Bak – Basis Voor Actuele Kunst, “Former West -About”, <[www.formerwest.org](http://www.formerwest.org)>, accessed 12 December 2016.

of the present analysis, I bring together a wide range of theoretical writings that share a non-representational approach to images, such as attentiveness to affective, embodied and material aspects of worldly phenomena, or with the potential of images or other cultural productions to *unfold* new understandings about worldly phenomena. In the analyses, these ideas are then combined with those practices within contemporary photography that, I argue, have a lot to be gained from precisely such an analytic approach. The aim of this approach is to further understanding, beyond the limitations of existing discussions, of how photography participates in the making and breaking of belonging in the areas concerned (and beyond).

## Theory

Throughout the book, the analyses are seen as significant on their own with regard to what they reveal about perceptions and understandings around photographic engagements with belonging. Moreover, they can be seen as experiments in the usefulness of the theoretical perspectives that I problematize and develop. Since part of the aim of the study is to problematize and develop further certain theoretical questions, the theoretical problem of the investigation is not one that can be readily defined in this introduction. Rather, the purpose of this section is to begin to hone in on the theoretical paths along which the discussions to follow will continue to tread. To begin, the discussion argues against a common theoretical thread in much writing on photography, which takes as its main aim to deconstruct and reveal the illusion behind the apparent truth-value of the photograph. While this is only a part of the otherwise varied writings of Weimar critics such as Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer and Bertolt Brecht, this particular stance toward photography has had an enormous influence in photography theory and criticism.<sup>10</sup> This deconstructive and critical position toward the medium re-appeared and was reformulated with notable vigour in the seventies in influential works by Susan Sontag, Allan Sekula, and some of

10. See, for example, Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford University Press, 1960); Kracauer, 'The Mass Ornament' in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Walter Benjamin, 'A Short History on Photography', *Screen*, 13/1, 1 March 1972, pp. 5–26; and Bertolt Brecht, 'No insight through photography', in *Brecht on Theatre & Radio* (London: Methuen, 2000).

Roland Barthes writings; formulations that in turn have been reiterated repeatedly ever since.<sup>11</sup> What many of these theorists, or in particular their followers in the last decades, have in common is a critique of the photographic medium's assumed role to serve as visual evidence for already existing claims about reality.

Photographs rarely offer explanations of the underlying complexities of a situation, or what the solution to a particular problem might be. As I will continue to explore, however, they often have the potential to offer an emotional and visceral connection to specific situations. And, as I will go on to show, for a select few contemporary theorists, this ability of photography to conjure deep emotions is not something to be shunned, but rather can be seen as one of its great strengths. At the same time, however, this very ability is also what can make photographs so misleading; the anti-analytic quality, which is its power, is potentially also a danger. As Brecht reminds us, emotion without critical reflection risks making the perceiver complacent, and recognising social injustice, as well as acting on it, requires critical thinking. While acknowledging the danger of simply remaining with this visceral reaction and leaving emotion unexamined, it is possible to recognise emotions as a "way in" to reflection, without which the reflection would lack the experience that makes something meaningful on levels other than the cognitive. In the last decade, there have been few but important contributions that expand photography theory beyond a deconstructive approach, by taking on the affective, situated and embodied aspects of taking and perceiving photographs.

## Photography theory

In terms of theories dealing specifically with photography, three scholars have emerged as having the greatest bearing on the discussion to follow. In much of visual culture theorist Ariella Azoulay's writing, the focus is on the potential for revelation that she argues is an intrinsic part of engaging with photographs in different contexts. As Azoulay explains, she takes seriously the ethic of seeing: "[it] is our historic responsibility, not only to produce photos, but to make them speak".<sup>12</sup> For Azoulay, this involves not iconoclastically eschewing photographs

11. See Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977); Alan Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain, Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983* (Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), and Roland Barthes, *Image–Music–Text. Essays Selected and Translated by Stephen Heath* (London: Fontana Press, 1977).

12. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, p. 122.

but creatively, collaboratively and critically engaging with them and the differing ways in which they affect the perceiver. Azoulay argues that photography needs to be understood not in terms of representation but of citizenry. She here defines a “citizenry of photography” rather than of nationhood. Analogous to national citizenship, Azoulay sees photography as at once a (unwritten) *contract*, and as an *act* that is repeatedly carried out by the members of that citizenry. Similarly, art historian Margaret Olin reflects on photography in terms of “tactile looking”. As with Azoulay, the significance for Olin lies in recognising photography as an *act* that *produces* more than it understands.<sup>13</sup> Often, what is produced through these acts is relationships and communities, or, as we will also see throughout the discussion, boundaries between communities. What comes into focus through the work of Azoulay and Olin, then, is a perspective on photography as a relational art, which brings into vision not so much the photographs themselves and *what* or *how* they portray, but rather the different ways through which people interact and engage as well as make or break connections through them.

Talking about the consequences of placing photographs, in particular, in a representative arena, media and art theorist Laura Marks makes a comparison between the aniconic suspicion of images in certain religious trains of thought and the way in which, in the contemporary situation, “images, though ubiquitous, are increasingly viewed askance”.<sup>14</sup> The suspicion that she talks about, which seems to always have been there in one way or another, involves the idea that the so-called indexical link between the photograph and the object is less trustworthy than it might appear.<sup>15</sup> This suspicion has been growing more

steadily since postmodern activities of the sixties and seventies, and drastically since the invention and spread of the digital camera. The consequence, as Marks explains, is that “although images are everywhere, they are disparaged for ‘signifying nothing’”.<sup>16</sup> My approach, in contrast, deliberately leaves aside the notion of signification in favour of paying attention to other types of understandings that appear through the production and perception of photographs.

#### *A wider perspective*

From a broader perspective, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have been influential in inspiring a theoretical trend in their philosophical writings that considers images and other cultural materials as productive, rather than expressive of ideas or feelings which were somehow already “out there” and which needed an external manifestation.<sup>17</sup> From a different theoretical standpoint, the intention of leaving representation behind can also be found in the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which brings attention to those ideas, or that understanding of the world, which is not a reduction of embodied experience. He suggests that it is a mistake to think that significant knowledge about the world can be reached through “translat[ing] into disposable significations a meaning first held captive in the thing and in the world itself” and the necessity of “falling back” into undivided carnal experience.<sup>18</sup> Other theorists have found inspiration in pre-modern writings to approach cultural artefacts as objects that potentially engender emotional, physical and cognitive transformations in the perceiver, rather than mimicking already existing sensations or concepts.<sup>19</sup> What combines these perspectives, and makes possible the jump from Deleuzian ontology to

13. Margaret Rose Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

14. Laura U. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010) p. 53.

15. Concerning himself with the question of representation in relation to moving images, but approaching the medium through its photographic aspects, Tom Gunning is critical of the way in which Charles Sanders Pierce’s concept of the index, one of the triad of signs in his semiotics, so often returns in a simplified and reduced form in writing on both photography and moving images. As Gunning explains, Pierce’s notion of the index is much more complex than the simplified version in which it is often applied and in which the complex system of interlocking systems that Pierce places it in is ignored in favour of a “rather simple definition as the existential trace or impression left by an object”. The present study shares Gunning’s belief that this simplified perception of the index so common to discussions

on photography has reached the limit of its usefulness in the theory of photography (as well as film and new media). Rather than a semiotics of photography, Gunning, taking inspiration from André Bazin, argues that photographic images should be approached in terms of aesthetics (which may or may not include the notion of the index in its manifold complexity). Tom Gunning, “Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality”, *differences*, 18/1, 2007, pp. 29–52.

16. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity*, p. 53.

17. Most notably in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone Press, 1988).

18. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 36.

19. See Jill Bennett, “Stigmata and Sense Memory: St Francis and the Affective Image”, *Art History*, 24/1, 2001, pp. 1–16; Suzannah Biernoff, “Carnal Relations: Embodied Sight in

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and then to medieval theology, is a focus on energy as a constructive (or destructive) force. The focus is on paying attention to and participating in these flows of energy, rather than selecting an object of knowledge to be dissected and drained of its meaning.<sup>20</sup> It is such theoretical perspectives that inspire the following three theorists – Marks (once again), art historian Jill Bennett, and philosopher Brian Massumi – and which will continue to be developed throughout the book.

In most of her writings, Marks speaks not of photographs in particular but on approaching cultural objects in general. In *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art*, she shows how theoretical approaches that were developed by medieval Islamic philosophers, and found their way through European modern philosophy, can be useful to contemporary reflections on art and culture. In particular, she develops the ideas of inner (bâtin) and outer (zâhir) vision, common to many mystical Sufi and Shi'ite writings, through the Deleuzian (& Leibnezian) language of *enfoldment*; zâhir being described as the unfolded plains of information and image, while bâtin describes deeper enfolded meanings that may or may not be unfolded at some point in time. Rather than seen as limited depictions of space – limited quantitatively in terms of the amount of information that is revealed through the images – Marks describes how images and artworks are able to function through a process of *unfolding*

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Merleau-Ponty, Roger Bacon and St Francis", *Journal of Visual Culture*, 4/1, 2005, pp. 39–52; Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art*.

20. In 2004, Bruno Latour criticised a long-lasting tendency within the humanities, of which he himself has been an important part, to "add deconstruction to deconstruction". What he turns against is a tradition of simplified deconstruction theory, which is applied piecemeal to all aspects of society and aims to iconoclastically debunk the apparent fetishism of any idea, belief or "gathering" (as he terms it). Instead of this kind of assembly line deconstruction, Latour talks about cultivating what he refers to as a "stubbornly realist attitude", but in which realist refers to a focus on matters of concern rather than matters of fact. As Latour goes on to explain, "reality is not defined by matters of fact" and "matters of fact are not all that is given in experience". Rather, facts (or things, beliefs, or "gatherings") are what draw people in, what they gather around, and deconstructing their constituents does not bring to light their function any more than dismantling a physical object makes us understand more about how it is used in different situations and what it means to people in different contexts. From this perspective, as Latour writes, "[t]he critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles". Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern", *Critical inquiry*, 30/2, 2004, pp. 225–248.

meanings within a particular space and the relations that this space holds. These meanings would otherwise have remained *enfolded* if it were not for the particular intervention carried out in the making of the work. From this perspective, the question of correspondence, or whether the image more or less accurately represents something outside the image, becomes obsolete. What is instead brought to the fore is the question of what information is privileged, and what information is passed over, in the encounter with the image.

Bennett, furthermore, approaches the aesthetic or affective experience of contemporary art as a particular kind of understanding that is engendered through the visual. Interacting with imagery that deals with "affectively charged space" becomes for Bennett a way of doing politics, which does not fall back on "old 'communicational' models", but instead a politics that emerges from a particular formal style.<sup>21</sup> In this way, the formal is not something that is reserved for a certain type of political subject, leaving those on the margins to deal with the "communicational". Instead, we find a space that is at once the limit and the law, affective and discursive, and in which global and cultural changes are experienced as circulating through, and leaving their mark on, physical bodies. Bennett, moreover, refers to the works she is scrutinising as a way of conducting politics. Yet this should not be understood as clearly stated represented opinions or arguments, but rather of doing or enacting politics, history or encounters of different kinds. Most significantly, these engagements are described as "affective encounters", which is not just the expression of a particular inner experience or external situation, but precisely an unfolding of an experience, which can never be extracted from the particular situated space in which it is encountered.

Additionally, the discussion and analyses to follow make use of a number of different writings in which theorists have made sense of and elaborated ideas of *affect* throughout the last two decades. The notion of affect can be traced back to Baruch Spinoza's philosophical treatise *Ethics* (1677), in which he describes affect as pre-individual forces, or as modifications or variations produced in a body, which can be configured or fixed into emotions and feelings, and which are connected to the potential to act.<sup>22</sup> Three centuries later, Massumi writes on affect as necessarily synesthetic and unbounded, but limited by its expression

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21. Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, p. 152.

22. Benedictus De Spinoza and E. M. Curley, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

through a particular body. It is in this most contracted and subjectified form that we know it as emotion. In this guise, however, there is always something that escapes capture. Rather than focusing on structure, and on the position of the body within a particular structure, the body, in its material and immaterial dimension, becomes an event in constant emergence as a subject, albeit never fully formed. Focusing on the dimension of emergence, then, allows us to forego the distinction between the individual and the collective in a given situation; not as a field that is ontogenetically pre-social, but as a relation, distinction or interaction, which is precisely what takes form within this field of perception. Speaking here specifically of the notion of belonging, Massumi writes how “[b]elonging is unmediated, and under way, never already-constituted. It is the openness of bodies to each other and to what they are not – the incorporeality of the event”.<sup>23</sup>

The work described in the following chapters continues along the path that these theorists have begun, both in terms of photography theory in particular and the phenomenon of belonging, including its relation to cultural productions in a wider sense. What they all have in common is a non-representational understanding, both of photographs and of images in general. As mentioned, I have borrowed the term non-representational theory from cultural geographer Nigel Thrift, who is one of the most influential theorists to make use of it. The notion originated in geographical studies but has expanded to include a range of subjects. Thrift deploys it to describe a focus on practices, action and performance. However, rather than aiming to find a representation of these acts in theory, the intention is to pay attention to what he refers to as the “on-flow... of everyday life”.<sup>24</sup> As such, he goes on to describe non-representational theory as “the geography of what happens”.<sup>25</sup> Throughout my discussions, however, I

make only infrequent reference to Thrift or others who make specific use of the term non-representational. Instead, I explore a number of other theorists who, despite not using this particular notion, can all be seen to move beyond a representational paradigm in their writings. As mentioned above, Azoulay argues that photography needs to be understood not in terms of representation but of *citizenry*. Olin, meanwhile, pays attention to photography as an *act* to be observed rather than as an object to be analysed. Marks can be seen to look beyond the question of correspondence that a representational perspective entails, and towards a question of what understandings can be *unfolded* through an image. Bennett, furthermore, describes her interest in the kind of art that can be seen as an expression of all that which is categorically *beyond representation*. In my case, the purpose of using a non-representational approach includes appreciating photographs not as a reduction of experience, but precisely as an act that, through its affective and embodied observation, is able to open up new understandings of belonging, including the differing ways in which photography functions in relation to it. As Thrift makes clear, the focus of the investigation is not to debunk the myth of the photographs in question, but rather to bring attention to “what is present in experience”.<sup>26</sup> He goes on to explain that the aim is to show how these occasions “might be enlivened – made more responsive and more active” through being engaged with in particular ways.<sup>27</sup> The suggestion is that it is through such an approach that both artistic practices and aesthetic theory are able to contribute to the understanding of the tensions and conflicts that underlie the question of belonging.

23. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002) p. 76.

24. Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, p. 5.

25. Ibid., p. 2. To elaborate, like much of the discussion of this book, non-representational theory includes a focus away from separate subjects as agents of actions, toward processes of subjectification, or those non-individual practices through which action becomes possible. In these processes, pre-cognitive aspects of human life are of more significance than conscious cognitive thought. Furthermore, non-representational is described as going against an idea of agency as a human quality in favour of giving attention to how it is expressed through non-human actors and materiality: “focus falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, pre-cognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional inter-

actions and sensuous dispositions...which escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimate representation”. Hayden Lorimer, “Cultural Geography: The Busyness of Being ‘More-Than-Representational’”, *Progress in Human Geography*, 29/1, 2005, p. 84. See also Phillip Vannini, “Nonrepresentational Theory and Symbolic Interactionism: Shared Perspectives and Missed Articulations”, *Symbolic Interaction*, 32/3 (2009); P. Simpson, *Ecologies of Street Performance: Bodies, Affects, Politics*, PhD-thesis, (Bristol: University of Bristol, 2010); Steve Pile and Michael Keith, *Geographies of Resistance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997).

26. Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, p. 2.

27. Ibid.



## Disposition

This monograph consists of three thematically divided sections, each consisting of two chapters. The sections move from a historical perspective to a focus on contemporary movements and transformations followed by a discussion of particular notions of materiality and trauma in relation to the notion of belonging. While some chapters deal with one geographical area more than another, each chapter discusses practices from both Sweden and Turkey (and their bordering areas). Since part of the aim of the book is to problematize existing theoretical notions, there is no separate section on theory. That said, the theoretical discussions commence each chapter and then reappear in connection with the various analyses. Each chapter contains a discussion around one or more of the theories described above. Part one is called *Archival Engagements* and deals with ways in which archives play a part in the making and breaking of different modalities that guide what presents itself to sense experience. The opening chapter entitled, “Photographic Unfoldings” traces a history of photographic archives and considers works by İnci Eviner and Katarina Pirak Sikku that can be understood as *looking back* at modalities around cultural identity and race constructed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The second chapter in this section is called “Unfolding Modernity”. It introduces works by Gülsün Karamustafa, Lina Selander, and Mats Eriksson, which I argue *unfold* new perspectives on historical events and tendencies that in one way or another relate to utopian notions of modernity.

*Migration and Movement* is the name given to the second part of the book. It looks at movement in relation to photographic practices, both in terms of works and practices that relate to bodies moving across geographical and imaginary borders of different kinds as well as how photography causes people to (re) act or move in different ways. The first chapter of this section, chapter three, is called “The Photograph in Migratory Aesthetics”. Here I discuss the *sightless vision* of surveillance technologies, the usefulness of the term *migratory aesthetics*, as well as how a number of photographic works reveal migration and diaspora as embodied and lived processes within singular situations. The chapter includes works by Banu Cennetoğlu, Tina Enghoff, Carlos Zaya, and Coşkun Aral. “Photography and Participation”, the fourth chapter, explores the kind of understandings that emerge from perceiving photography as an act rather than as representation. It discusses how a number of online and offline acts partic-

ipate in the making and breaking of different senses of local as well as global belongings. Practices both within and outside the art world are considered in order to test the ground for some of the theories on photographic practices generally. The chapter includes analyses of the role of photography during the Gezi protests in Istanbul and their aftermath, in online community sites such as *AKAKurdistan*, as well as in an interactive artistic project by Serkan Taycan.

Section three, *Materiality and Trauma*, deals with the relationship between photography, materiality and trauma. In chapter five, “Material Belonging”, I explore ways in which contemporary photographers move away from identity politics toward explorations of belonging as emotional and physical attachment. I also investigate how particular photographic works are able to bring out the materiality of situated spaces in which belonging is created and experienced in markedly potent ways. Included here are works by Serkan Taycan, Vanessa Winship, Jenny Rova, and Hendrik Zeitler. The sixth and final chapter engages with historical events as traumas that need to be addressed and reworked from embodied and effective encounters in the present. It is at this point that I return to works by Katarina Pirak Sikku and Serkan Taycan before moving beyond the geographical areas hitherto studied in order to focus on the work of Walid Ra’ad plus that of Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige that relate to the destruction of Beirut during the civil war.



*Part 1*

## **Archival Engagements**

## Photographic Unfoldings

*In which I explore the notion of modalities of visibility, the relationship between the archive and violence, the historical origins of the photographic archive, as well as the aesthetics of enfolding/unfolding in relation to archival practices. These theoretical reflections are followed by an examination of works by İnci Eviner and Katarina Pirak Sikku, and a more cursory look at works by İpek Duben and Liselotte Wajstedt. I explore how these works unfold certain modalities around race and cultural identity constructed during the nineteenth century in Sweden and the Ottoman Empire.*

### Archival Energies

The focus of this chapter and of the next is the unfolding of new perceptions and understandings from the archive; the archive being understood not only as a physical repository, but also in the widest of senses, as the sum of images circulating within and amongst cultures and in the media. The decision to foreground the archive in the first two chapters emerged from the research process, during which I came across a number of artists whose practice involved found and archival photographs, and whose work seemed to lend itself to a discussion within a framework of archival energies. In this chapter, I introduce a number of theories that return throughout the ones to follow, including notions of *enfolding/unfolding* and the idea of *looking back* at categorisations that have been put into place during different historical eras. Here and in succeeding sections, the archive is understood against a backdrop of the modern information soci-

ety which took shape in Europe in the nineteenth century before becoming a global phenomenon towards the end of the twentieth century. The archive is understood here in part as a “code”, or a particular logic related to the formation of meaning, which mediates imaginations in particular times and places.<sup>28</sup>

The “code” of the archive to which this chapter refers is connected to the theme of belonging, since the structures of global information society often separate groups and individuals into different categories of (non-)belonging. Visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff talks about different *modalities* or *complexes of visibility* throughout history, to describe a certain organisation or classification of visibility as prevalent during a particular historical time.<sup>29</sup> Visibility, as Mirzoeff uses the term, refers to the imaginary authority that is given the right within a particular modality to designate who is allowed to see and who and what has the duty to be seen. This authority does not refer to a particular person or group of people, but rather the social organisation and processes that classify and separate subjects and objects within a certain complex. Significantly, visibility is for Mirzoeff the authority that presents this classification and separation as a particular aesthetic, presenting it as “the proper, of duty, of what is felt to be right and hence pleasing, ultimately even beautiful”.<sup>30</sup> In his understanding of the aesthetic of power, which is precisely what is at stake in his discussion, Mirzoeff turns to the philosopher Jacques Rancière’s definition of aesthetics as “the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience”.<sup>31</sup> For Rancière, as for Mirzoeff, this system of forms is found at the very core of politics. It is against this given modality of visibility, then, that Mirzoeff argues for the “right to look”, to refuse to be segregated and to *invent new forms*. Works that take the archive as their source material can, from this perspective, be seen as “liberating” forms and sensations from the archive,

28. Richard Grusin describes the concept of pre-mediation as the function of global media to pre-construct imaginations of the “possible worlds, or possible paths” that the future may reveal, thereby limiting the possibilities that can presently be imagined. The code can be understood as the logic of these available imaginations, which set the perceived boundaries for potentials or possibilities. Richard A. Grusin, *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

29. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visibility* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

30. *Ibid.*, p. 476.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 485.

in the sense that the artist has the potential to interfere with the authority of the archival code as it has once been set in place, and release new constructions with new information codes.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Shadow archive*

In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* philosopher Jacques Derrida traces the etymology of the archive to the Greek *arkhē*, meaning at once *commencement* and *commandment*. The word archive thus contains, as Derrida describes it, two principles; namely the “physical, historical, or ontological principle” that describes the origin or place where something begins, and the nomological principle, or the principle of the law, “where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given.”<sup>33</sup> The function of the archive is thus as much to describe and provide the facts of an event as it is to provide the authority that determines how and from where these descriptions are to be carried out. Consequentially, the archive can never remain outside of that which is commemorated, but inevitably produces, as much as it records, the events of history and the present. Furthermore, Derrida, in his Freudian inspired reflections, includes the *death drive* as an intrinsic part of the powers of archiving. This Freudian perspective is incompatible with the concept of enfoldment, in which, as I will explore further, nothing dies, but rather becomes unfolded. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note how this perspective inspires Derrida to describe how, while the archive’s function is to unify, identify and classify events through repetition, involved in this very function is, at the same time, the *violence of forgetting*. Derrida refers to this as the putting to death of something through the very act of memorialising it: “the archive is made possible by the death, aggression, and destruction, that is to say also by originary finitude and expropriation.”<sup>34</sup> Archiving thus at once functions to *produce* and *reduce* something, which is why

32. For a more extensive discussion of art as liberating the archive see “Archive Fever: Okwui Enwezor, Christian Boltanski, Luc Sante, Lorna Simpson, George Lewis & Paul Holden-gräber”, at the New York Public Library, 14 April 2008, <<http://www.nypl.org/audiovideo/archive-fever-okwui-enwezor-christian-boltanski-luc-sante-lorna-simpson-george-lewis-paul>>, accessed 3 March 2014.

33. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 9.

34. Ibid., p. 59.

the archive always works against itself, introducing, as Derrida puts it, “a priori, forgetfulness and the archivolithic” into the heart of the archive.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, the totalising forces of the archive always leave something behind; the *ashes*, as Derrida puts it, that the archival event is reduced to. The ashes can be understood as that which is irreducible or that which will not fit into the structure of the archive. In *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)*, cultural theorist Akira Mizuta Lippit develops further Derrida’s idea of what is found beyond the all-encompassing archival energies, through bringing in the writer Jorge Luis Borges’ description of the universal Library from “The Library of Babel”. The archive, he explains, as the universal Library, takes up all space and continues to expand, but nevertheless always leaves space as well. It is that which is left behind after the universal library has archived “everything” that Lippit refers to as the *shadow archive*. Furthermore, it is in, or as, this shadow archive that the *you* that is able to *look back* is found: “You are there. You are the limit and surplus of the archive – an irreducible, atomic shadow of the archive.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, there is a potential subjectification in this inevitable excess, a possibility that is always available to create something new from that which has seemingly been put into place. The task of this other archive (the shadow or *anarchive*, as Lippit also refers to it) is precisely to go against the archive: “to protect the secret, its heterogeneity, and divide the archive from itself.”<sup>37</sup> The shadow archive is there as a remainder. It is that which is not put in place by the archive, the un-archivable. In other words, the task of the shadow archive is to undo the totalising, unifying tendencies of the archive, and, using Mirzoeff’s term, *look back* at the archive.

#### *The photographic archive*

From a more concrete and historical perspective, photography theorist Allan Sekula’s influential “The Body and the Archive” traces the proliferation of archival tendencies to mid and late nineteenth century Europe.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, Sekula points out how these propensities coincided with and influenced a wider

35. The archivolithic is the term that Derrida uses for the death drive or the compulsion to repeat that he describes as intrinsic to the archive. Ibid.

36. Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 7.

37. Ibid.

38. Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive”, *October*, 39, 1986, pp. 3–64.

tendency to systematise bureaucratic systems, and the legal system in particular. The archive, not just containing photographs, but all kinds of statistics, facts, and information, provides the urform of this system. The cataloguing and categorisation of the physical features of criminals and the ideal social citizen is presented by Sekula as a highly significant and indicative aspect of the archival tendencies of this time. Furthermore, Sekula talks of a very explicit deterrent or repressive logic behind the photographs used for criminal identification, as they are “designed quite literally to facilitate the *arrest* of their referent”.<sup>39</sup> In other words, the individual criminal body is captured by the camera and placed not only within a physical archive, or filing cabinet, but also within a growing generalised socially and morally hierarchical shadow archive “that encompasses an entire social terrain while positioning individuals within that terrain”.<sup>40</sup> In his discussion, then, Sekula also refers to a concept of shadow archive, but from a perspective entirely different to that of Lippit as described above. While Lippit speaks of the shadow archive as that which is able to escape archival forces, that which is un-archivable, Sekula’s shadow archive describes the all-encompassing tendencies of the archival forces themselves. These are forces that are able to consume and produce those very codes and patterns that guide perceptions of the world within a particular time and context. Within this wider Foucauldian system of social archiving, physiognomy and phrenology, which both shared the belief that the physical characters of the body could be seen as signs of inner character, were particularly keen to embrace the documentary and archival possibilities of photography.<sup>41</sup> As Sekula points out, however, the result of the efforts to encompass and structure a wide diversity in the archives was as much in creating the structure that they aimed to interpret as in the interpretation itself. Furthermore, the interpretive methods themselves were based on com-

39. Ibid., p. 7.

40. Ibid., p. 10.

41. Physiognomy involves the notion that it is possible to determine personality (and perhaps morality) from outer appearance alone, while phrenology focused specifically on the relationship between a person’s character and the morphology of their skull. While physiognomy and phrenology were considered legitimate scientific disciplines during the first half of the nineteenth century, they were considered pseudoscience toward the end of the century. Bachmann, “Face to Face: Physiognomy & Phrenology”, *The Shelf, Preserving Harvard’s Library Collections* 24 September 2012, <<http://blogs.harvard.edu/preserving/2012/09/24/face-to-face-physiognomy-phrenology/>>, accessed 6 June 2016.

parison, requiring the construction of a “larger, ‘universal’ archive” within which clear delineations between the norm and its deviations could be construed.<sup>42</sup> As Sekula explains, the archive in this sense is at once an “abstract paradigmatic entity” and a concrete institution, both of which provide the foundation for making comparisons through “the general equivalence between images”.<sup>43</sup> The photographic image then became reduced to the points that could be used as comparisons, allowing photography to be perceived within these systems as a universal language with the possibility of reducing nature to its geometrical essence. As Sekula goes on to explain, however, the early promise of photography would eventually wane in the face of the massive and chaotic archives created. Nevertheless, the potential involved in the capacity of the photographic technologies to generalise still survives within the visualising technology of today. The promise, as Sekula describes, of taking on “the general, abstract proposition” lives on in the operations of the national security state as well as in contemporary surveillance society.<sup>44</sup> In chapter three, I discuss contemporary surveillance society further and take a closer look at works that can be understood as *looking back* at the patterns that are currently in place.

Before moving on, it is necessary to bring together the divergent views of the different theorists mentioned above. These are the Freudian inspired deconstructive reflections of Derrida and further elaborations of Lippit, and the Foucauldian genealogies of Sekula and Mirzoeff. In the structuralism of Mirzoeff and Sekula, an attempt is made to show what has been put into place through history; those patterns that have come to be taken for granted. In Derrida’s reflections, attention is paid to the archive’s tendency to unify, identify and classify events through repetition. What they have in common is a focus on the mechanisms that put things into place, and perceiving photographs and photographic archives from this perspective brings attention to photography’s power and potential precisely to unify, classify, and identify. At the same time, however, Lippit, Derrida, and Mirzoeff all bring up the potential of opposing energies as well; Derrida’s idea of the ashes, Lippit’s elaborations of the shadow archive, and Mirzoeff’s idea of looking back. These are energies or processes

42. Sekula, “The Body and the Archive”, p. 14.

43. Ibid., p. 17.

44. Ibid., p. 54.

that open up that which is put into place, that break with existing codes or patterns, or that undo the totalising, unifying tendencies of the archive. To different extents, however, these processes are brought up precisely as shadows, comments, or asides to the more general and overarching archival energies. In the immanence of radical enfolding that I will go on to discuss, however, there is a shift in perspective; here what is brought into experience is all that which has not been put into place. From this perspective, as I will go on to explain, the archival or structuring processes, within which photography is so often placed, become rather a comment on the infinite potential of the field of immanence.

#### *Unfolding the archive*

The ideas set out above are undoubtedly useful in understanding the totalising and structuralising tendencies of the archive. However, in order to reach deeper into how different contemporary engagements are able to undo and reveal new perspectives from archival materials, it is necessary to bring in the aesthetics of *enfolding/unfolding*. I borrow this aesthetics from the writings of Laura Marks and suggest that it is a useful tool when engaging with the archive in that it describes the relationship between images and information, and the archive itself. The notions of *enfolding* and *unfolding*, furthermore, make clear how code is constructed through continuously (actively or passively) sustaining a certain informational structure, as well as how new elements can become visible through unfolding new informational patterns from the archive to be perceived. Marks describes how, in contemporary media culture, “what we see is more than ever generated by an underlying code”.<sup>45</sup> She writes about the databases and algorithms that make up the processes that create what we see and hear, and borrows terms from Islamic Aesthetics to describe how both classical Islamic art and contemporary new media art are able to *unfold* the underlying structures of societal and material codes, and/or reveal the code as an interface to the infinite. In the aesthetics of unfolding that Marks proposes, the concept of *information* is seen as interchangeable with the idea of the code as we know it, and is described as having an intermediary function between the concepts of *infinite* and *image*. The concept of the *infinite* is itself fundamental to Islamic and other philosophical and theological medieval thinking, and as a concept returns in different understandings throughout the chapters to follow. In the context of

45. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity*, p. 2.

Islamic aesthetics, the infinite describes the eternal and a-temporal truths that define the divine and are sometimes interpreted as being expressed by the never-ending continuation of a given pattern in Islamic design.<sup>46</sup> As a contemporary, worldly and secular alternative to the religious concept of the infinite, Marks takes inspiration from Gilles Deleuze to bring in the idea of the “immanent infinite”, which she describes as “an infinity that cannot be reduced to unity”.<sup>47</sup> In other words, the immanent infinite describes the endless sensations, perceptions, “virtualities” and “intensities” (to use the language of Deleuze) that remain enfolded or that have not yet surfaced into that which is actual and definable. The *image*, on the other hand, in worldly as well as religious understandings, describes the actual sensible and physical forms that can be directly perceived by the senses and defined by the intellect. The third concept of *information* is then brought in to describe quantifications of the infinite, for example the mathematical formulas (or, in the contemporary version, the digital codes) that are recognised as being able to translate infinities into actual image.<sup>48</sup> An example from classical Islamic art can be found in the *girih* mode, which eleventh-century scientist and philosopher Ibn-Haytham talks of as geometrical shapes that exist

46. Significantly, in her book *Beauty & Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Arts and Architecture*, Valérie Gonzalez brings attention to the study of aesthetics in classical Islamic philosophy as focusing on sensory experience. Gonzalez describes the aesthetics of thinkers such as al-Haytham, Ibn-Sina, Ibn-Hazm and Ibn-Rushd as “a philosophy of sensory experience”, which does not treat its subject of study as separate as an object of study, but as functioning within a wider area of thought, including the ontological, religious, ethical, etc. She quotes Ibn-Sina who asserts that “access to that by which our soul becomes knowing begins by way of the senses”. Through such a phenomenological way of theorising aesthetic experiences, any knowledge that appears is seen as contextual and inseparable from the sensations of its experience. Gonzalez describes how, particularly in the writings of al-Haytham, aesthetic appreciation is not seen as going through logic, but is seen as residing entirely within the intuitive and sensitive faculties. As such, Gonzalez calls al-Haytham the first aesthetician. Valérie Gonzalez, *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001).

47. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity*, p. 21.

48. In 2007, Marks together with Raegan Kelly created the web-based project “Enfolding and Unfolding: An Aesthetics for the Information Age” to show how images unfold from “the thickness of experience” through for example the codes of the digital and then into the actualised image. I return to this project in chapter two. Laura Marks, “Enfolding and Unfolding: An Aesthetics for the Information Age”, *Vectors Journal, Perception*, 2/2, Winter 2007 <<http://vectors.usc.edu/issues/4/unfoldingenfolding/>> accessed 2 May 2012.

in an intermediate zone between immaterial higher realities and the confused material objects of sensible forms. The literary theorist and poet Ibn-Rashiq, contemporary to Ibn-Hatham, similarly describes the common understanding of knowledge as being of three kinds:

the highest, which is the knowledge of what escapes sensual perception and can only be attained through reason and analogy; the intermediate, which is the knowledge of the precious rules of decorum that reason derives from natural objects such as numbers, geometry, the art of astrology, and the art of melody; and the inferior, which is the knowledge of particular things and bodily objects.<sup>49</sup>

As Marks explains, then, what many of the images that we look at here index is “not the visible world... but the code that produced them.”<sup>50</sup> Marks furthermore talks about the sameness with which certain paths are reiterated and reinforced within the media of the contemporary information age. While the virtual chaos of seemingly boundless information appears to eternally shape itself into new constellations, it tends to “reiterate and reinforce certain paths with a terrible clichéd, controlling sameness.”<sup>51</sup> Because of the vastness of the information archive, the subject may often feel like s/he constructs the paths as s/he goes along, whereas often enough s/he follows the already laid out patterns of the information networks. Engaging with the archive becomes a way of revealing particular images as interfaces to a particular information structure, and potentially bringing out a sense of the infinite perceptions that this information, in turn, points to. If unfolding tends to follow prescribed paths, there is always a potential for an alternative route to be taken.

So far I have looked into the concept of *modalities of visibility* in order to recognise how certain aesthetics are at play within particular times and contexts, guiding perceptions of what presents itself to sense experience. I have brought in the idea of *looking back*, as a way of counteracting the authority of visibility, and I have looked at reflections around the systematising and unifying energies

49. Gülrü Necipoğlu and Mohammad Al-Asad, *The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture: Topkapı Palace Library Ms H. 1956* (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1995).

50. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity*, p. 53.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

of the archive, as well as how contrasting energies can be understood as intrinsic to the archive itself. Furthermore, I have begun to trace the paths through which the technologies of photography developed alongside, and at times together with, a more general archival tendency in the nineteenth century. The latter strove to not only systematise bureaucratic systems, but the very social sphere itself. Finally, I looked into the aesthetics of *enfolding/unfolding*, bringing in the concepts of *information*, *image* and the *infinite* as tools to understand the ways in which archival engagements can reveal new perceptions from a particular modality of visibility. Temporarily leaving the theoretical discussion aside, I now turn to the particular context of late nineteenth-century Istanbul, during which photography became increasingly popular, both as a commodity and as a political tool.

### Orientalist Modalities of Visibility

Systematising and categorising tendencies were not only found in Europe during the nineteenth century. There are also numerous examples of manifestations of archival tendencies in the Ottoman Empire (and elsewhere) at this time. They can be found in the documentation of the peoples of the empire as collected, for example, in the albums of Sultan Abdülhamid, who played a significant part in involving photography in the everyday practices and government of the empire in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> The *Sultan's Albums* consisted of a number of carefully produced photographic collections of the different peoples of the Ottoman lands, which were created as gifts to diplomats, sent abroad, or shown at world fairs around 1890. However, as much as they speak of an interest in representing the Ottoman population through a categorising and systematising approach to photography, the images were scarcely reproduced and exerted little influence on the general public.<sup>53</sup> Instead, the categorising

52. Since Abdülhamid was afraid of terrorist attacks, he rarely left the palace. Instead, he used photographic portraits to select the candidates for the military school as well as grant amnesty to certain prisoners. See Mustafa Özen, “Visual Representation and Propaganda: Early Films and Postcards in the Ottoman Empire, 1895–1914,” *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 6/2 October 2008, pp. 145–157.

53. As Edhem Eldem describes in Nir Shafir, Emily Neumeier, and Edhem Eldem, “Following Ottoman Photographs”, in Chris Gratien (ed.), *Ottoman History Podcast 195*, 11 August



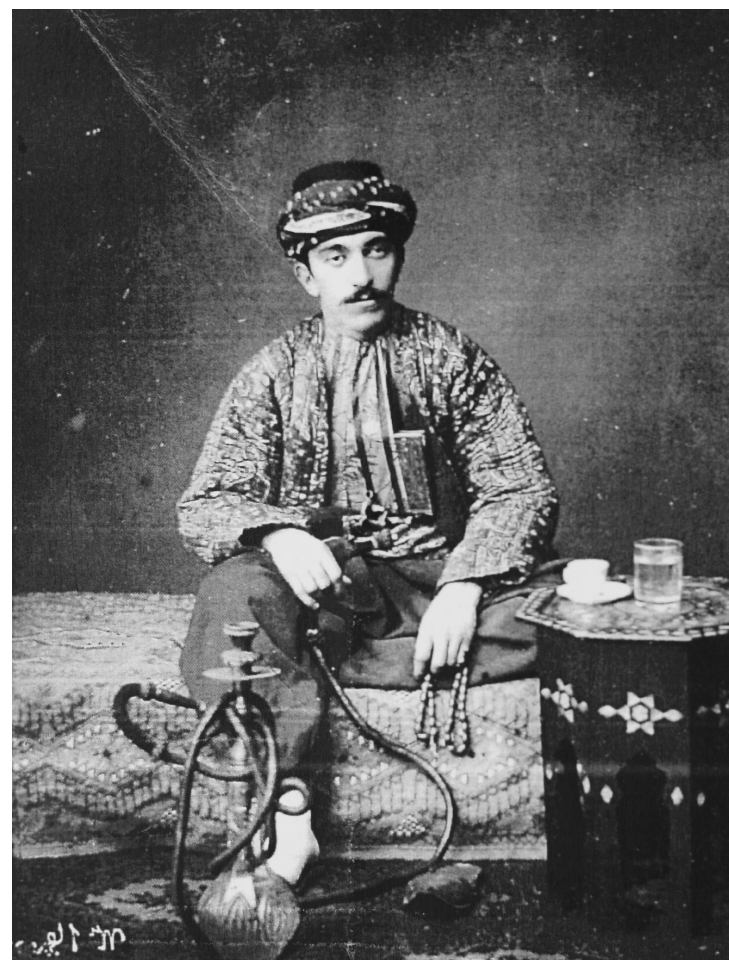
tendencies with perhaps the most enduring influence are to be found in the commercial proliferation of images of the different types of Ottomans produced by the photographic studios. These took the most common form of postcards which were distributed widely around the turn of the nineteenth century. As historian Edhem Eldem points out, the arrival of photography in the Ottoman Empire coincides historically with the increasing popularity and accessibility of the Orient as a commodity in an increasingly culturally and politically powerful West.<sup>54</sup> Commercial photography studios began to open throughout the Ottoman Empire in the 1850s, and became increasingly popular in the second half of the nineteenth century. Finding a lucrative business in creating stereotypical photographs for western tourists who wanted to bring home with them visual evidence of their travels, the early commercial studios often constructed photographs which revealed more about European imaginations of the Orient than of Ottoman life in the nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup> These photographs, apparently depicting Ottoman subjects, would often be divided into the different “types” of Ottomans (with certain fixed characteristics) in the sales catalogues; these included, for example, the young Turkish man (foremost interested in leisure and sensuous pleasures), the picturesque and timeless artisan, the mysterious dervish, or the sumptuous harem woman.<sup>56</sup> Swedish photographer Guillaume Berggren is a case in point. Berggren, like many of his contemporaries, created highly evocative images of the different “types” of Ottoman subjects. A studio shot from 1880 shows a *Young Turk* surrounded with all the attributes of the idle oriental preoccupied above all with sensuous pleasure. (fig. 1) He is lazily seated on a divan with a water pipe in one hand and a cup of coffee and a glass of water on a table beside him, prepared it seems for a long period of leisure. Capitalising on a, by this time, already well-established and largely unchallenged idea of European, and Christian, superiority, images such as these did little more than confirm the European images of the moral decadence of Eastern men in

2015 (Boğaziçi University, 2015), <<http://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2015/08/ottoman-empire-photography-edhem-eldem.html>>, accessed 11 August 2015.

54. Edhem Eldem, *Consuming the Orient* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, 2007).

55. Ibid.

56. See Engin Özendes, *Türkiye’de Fotoğraf, Photography in Turkey* (Istanbul: History Foundation, 1999).



1) Guillaume Berggren, *Young Turk*, albumen print from dry collodion negative, c.1880

the minds of the travellers as well as Western consumers who never left their home countries.<sup>57</sup>

57. See, for example, Ayshe Erdoğan, “The Victorian Market for Ottoman Types”, *History of Photography*, 23/3, 1999, pp. 269–273.

Out of these constructed “types” of Orientals, the one most popular with foreign tourists was clearly the woman of the harem.<sup>58</sup> With particular conviction, the studio photograph of the Ottoman woman could recreate scenes that the visual consumer had come to know through orientalist painting and writing. The reality of the life of the Muslim woman, and in particular the women of the harem, was something that few foreigners could experience first-hand. Consequently, photographic depictions of the Turkish woman and the harem were, more than any other aspect of Ottoman society, left to the imagination of the photographers, who created the kinds of scenes that Western tourists in particular, but also increasingly local consumers, expected and dreamed of seeing.<sup>59</sup> In these studio constructions, the oriental setting was created with familiar props: a backdrop with an oriental pattern, the subject reclining on a divan, a water pipe in one hand and with refreshments near at hand, primarily suggestive of sensuous pleasures. By the end of the century, these images of the Oriental would appear in the even-more accessible and popular form of postcards, which soon became not only a basic and essential feature of tourism, but also a major item of consumption for locals.<sup>60</sup> The reproducibility of the photograph and its accessibility in the shape of postcards at this time allowed the apparent “documentation” of the oriental types to be dispersed both inside and outside of the Ottoman Empire at an unprecedented speed, thereby creating modalities of visibility or manners of enfolded that are still negotiated today.

While certain archival images seem to present themselves as expressions of a particular modality of visibility, such as the studio portraits from late nineteenth century Istanbul, it is possible to recognise how certain archival images in themselves seem to unfold alternatives to the patterns set in place within a particular modality. In *Raw Histories, Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*, visual anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards describes photography as a “raw” and ambiguous medium that is essentially shaped by the specificities of the many different worlds in which it lives.<sup>61</sup> As a “raw” medium, Edwards suggests that rather than concentrating on content alone, as is so often the case with historical images, one

58. Ibid.

59. See Engin Özendes, *From Sébah & Joaillier to Foto Sabah, Orientalism in Photography* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Publications, 2007); see also Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

60. See Eldem, *Consuming the Orient*.

61. Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

should focus on the detail as well as the entire “performative quality” of the photographs. This involves paying attention to the image’s formal aspects and how these participate in its perception or performance. While concentrating on content alone reveals only the obvious, directing the focus towards its performative quality places the photograph as a part of an act to be engaged with, rather than just a recognisable unfolding of a particular modality. (In chapter four, I develop further the idea of photography as an act and what is potentially unfolded through seeing photographs from this perspective.) Another Istanbul studio photograph by the renowned Abdullah brothers shows two women portrayed as oriental beauties. (fig. 2) The divans, the essential water pipe, as well as the elaborate oriental dresses are still there, but this time they seem to perform a different kind of act. The quality of the clothing and how they fit the subjects, the positions in which the women are seated and the composed sentence of their gazes, along with the attention paid to the lighting and composition create a scene whose subjects appear to speak back to the viewer, rather than just being fixed as representations of a certain preconceived utterance. As such, the photograph undermines the impulse to place the image within a simplified historical common narrative. The photograph may be another composition to be sold as a souvenir, or may even be an image of tourists posing in oriental garb, but the solemnity of its performance suggests that it may just as well be a local portrait using the tropes of commercial orientalism but in a different kind of unfolding that re-appropriates these symbols to become something of one’s own.<sup>62</sup>



2) Abdullah frères, *Women smoking Narghile*, 1890

62. No information is available about who the portrayed women actually are. That said, however, they are unlikely to be Turkish, since it was not only socially unacceptable but also punishable

As a raw medium, then, photographs are just as likely to complicate, or even challenge, existing modalities as they are to complete them. As such, they are able to offer all the difficulties and possibilities of a “fracture, an opening up”, towards a true cross-cultural experience.<sup>63</sup> This experience is not easily perceived from one perspective or definitely contained, but opens up a myriad of possibilities yet to be explored. In other words, as much as photographic technologies played a crucial part in the archival tendencies that created particular manners of unfolding during this historical time, paying attention to photography as a raw medium can function just as much as the *looking back* that Mirzoeff argued is necessary to counteract the authority of visuality. From another perspective, recognising the rawness of the photographic image becomes a way of directing one’s vision beyond the image as an interface to information or code, and seeing it instead as a trace of the infinite. In modern visual society (including the nineteenth, twentieth, as well as the twenty-first century), some images, like the one discussed above by the Abdullah brothers, seem to have the ability to point beyond themselves. Furthermore, these images can be understood as pointing not just to the codes that shape the modality in which they are found, but precisely to the vitalities of the infinite – if, that is, they are given attention in their entire affective and performative quality, rather than just analysed as signifiers. Other images, however, such as many of the commercial images and postcards whose visual language to a large extent was set in place in the second half of the nineteenth century, seem more resistant to engagement. They remain stubbornly in their places as parts of a certain modality of visuality, which appears to confirm the identity of a particular group of worldly beings.

#### *Untamed differences*

It is in relation to these latter, more resistant, representations that I turn to the work of contemporary artists for help. Turkish artist İnci Eviner, for example, has taken it upon herself to re-invigorate some of the more stubbornly frozen images of history. In several of her works, she re-appropriates images whose subjects she feels in one way or another need to be re-positioned in order for their voices to be heard.<sup>64</sup> In the *New Citizen* series from 2010, she takes the

for Muslim women to appear in such scenes. See Özendes, *From Sébah & Joaillier to Foto Sabah, Orientalism in Photography*.

63. As put by Edwards, *Raw Histories*, p. 6.

64. From conversation with the artist, March 2011. Throughout my discussions, I often refer

subjects from found postcards that echo those patterns that were once formed in the visual representations of oriental subjects, places them on a background of colonial wallpaper motifs and presents them with new, unexpected actions. In one piece from the series, we see the image of a young boy who is covering and caressing himself (becoming, according to Eviner, a narcissist in the face of Europe’s Islamophobia), together with a photograph of a Chinese woman who has become suddenly preoccupied by the appearance of her own phallus. (fig. 3) Replacing the original characters of the wallpaper, these subjects are given their own gestures and have literally been made to move and to direct their gazes inwards to what is behind the version of the self that has been turned into an image through the orientalist gaze. The appropriation of the wallpaper is significant in that, in its general function, wallpaper tends to exist beyond our deliberate gaze; like the codes and patterns that guide our perceptions of the beings of the world, the patterns of the wallpaper infiltrate into our subcon-

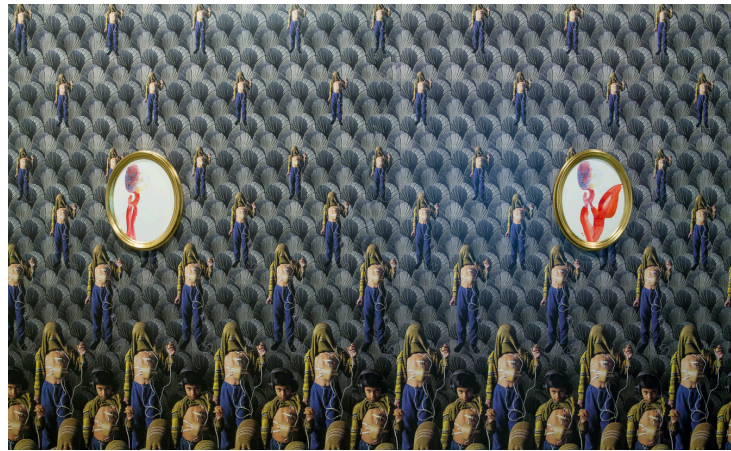


3) İnci Eviner, *An Explosive Heart*, site-specific installation, digital print and watercolour applied on the wall, 2002. Courtesy of the artist and Galeri Nev Istanbul

to conversations that I had with the artist. The aim of this is not to “return to the source” and claim that their word is in any way final in relation to the works that I discuss. Rather, I refer to their ideas as one voice amongst many that, from different perspectives, are able to inform my understanding of the works.



4) İnci Eviner, *New Citizen II*, HD Video, 2'18" loop, Still from video, 2009. Courtesy of the artist and Galeri Nev Istanbul



scious. In many of her works, Eviner plays with the power of the photographic and with image-space. As you get closer, what at first appear as harmoniously flowing motifs are revealed in their hidden violence. For example, in *An explosive heart* (2002) Eviner digitally assembles images of a host of innocent looking children who, as the viewer gets closer, are revealed to have explosives strapped to their chests in the manner of suicide bombers. (fig. 4) What the wallpaper and the subjects of the images have in common is that they both belong to the European imperialist era and both show a version of the “exotic east” turned into a motif. Eviner herself tells how these wallpapers, despite their innocent or impartial appearance, allow her to see what Europe includes culturally but excludes politically.<sup>65</sup> Significantly, she explains how the wallpapers cannot avoid partaking in this process of signification because they are a part of the modalities of visibility that determines what is seen and how we see.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the near east was becoming increasingly “tamed” politically through a series of defeats, allowing it to be viewed with a comforting sense of safety and turned into another consumer object for Western audiences.<sup>66</sup> Consequentially, Eviner goes on to clarify her ambition to find what is hidden in these representations by referring to the “momentary

65. Conversation with the artist, March 2011.

66. See Eldem, *Consuming the Orient*.

emergence of... an *untamed* difference”.<sup>67</sup> The object of consumption, as that which is contained in the images – be it the Orient, the Oriental, or the Woman – is tamed, controlled, or *enfolded* through the structure of a certain modality. Through engaging with the images, sometimes interfering with and rearranging them, a different kind of unfolding is carried out as that which was enfolded is brought into experience, and that which was frozen, tamed and controlled is made to move and speak. In another work, *Harem* from 2009, Eviner brings this movement out with perhaps even further clarity, as she uses her own images in an intervention into one of Antoine-Ignace Melling’s engravings depicting the Harem. The women of Melling’s engraving, who have been drawn with extreme meticulousness and almost scientific attention to detail by a man who clearly never set a foot within the spaces that he has depicted, are replaced by Eviner’s own moving images of women playing, demonstrating, biting each other and performing a range of other unexpected actions. In an interview, Eviner describes how she “gives a voice to these frozen women and forces them to reveal whatever they have been hiding”.<sup>68</sup> In this work, the stark and not always flattering reality of the contemporary images are used to contrast the idealisation of a historically constructed modality.

Before moving on, I wish to take a briefer look at a work by Turkish artist İpek Duben. Entitled *What is a Turk?* (2003), it presents more of an ironic interpretation of how both images and text participate in the construction of a certain manner of unfolding. For the piece, Duben selects thirty very different images, both from her own photo albums as well as archival material, postcards and newspaper images. She juxtaposes these with descriptions of the “Turk” by different western authors, including Rudyard Kipling and Robert Kaplan, who visited Turkey and wrote their impressions about the people and the culture at different points in history. The found images carry a wide range of connotations, avoiding thereby any kind of straightforward comment on prejudice and stereotyping. They are, rather, an ironic reflection on the complexity of how images participate in creating different patterns of identity and belonging. One sepia toned image shows an Ottoman soldier in uniform flanked by two children, a

67. İnci Eviner in Nazlı Gürlek “Beauty, the Beast and Other Broken Narratives”, Interview with the Artist, *İnci Eviner*, (Istanbul: Galeri Nev, 2009), pp. 131–132 (my emphasis).

68. İnci Eviner quoted by Emre Baykal, “The Energy that Lies Between the Surface”, *İnci Eviner* (Istanbul: Galeri Nev, 2009), p. 13.



5–6) İpek Duben, excerpt from *What is a Turk*, 2003.  
Courtesy of the artist

girl and a boy. (fig. 5) From the clothing and background the image seems to date from around the turn of the last century. The man and the boy are wearing fezzes while the little girl's hair is plaited and tied with white ribbons.<sup>69</sup> On the back of the postcard is a quotation that reads: "Nevertheless, the Turks, though not actually regarded as European people, did live for some six hundred years within the boundaries of Europe".<sup>70</sup> Another photograph is a more recent snapshot of three women sitting around an outdoor table. (fig. 6) The women appear relaxed, smiling jovially for the camera. On the back of this image is the following quotation: "Sarah's choice of an Islamic boyfriend is, according to Illey, a plea for attention, like anorexia. Sarah's affection is not only a disease but subterfuge".<sup>71</sup> The piece refuses to make any straightforward correlations between the images, the text and the historical, political and social environment from which they are

69. As part of modernisation reforms during the days of the early Republic, the parliament banned the fez (and the veil) in 1925.

70. The quote is attributed to David Holtham, *The Turks* (1972).

71. On the back is also a reference to *The New Statesman and Society*, 2 February, 1996.

extracted. As such, it can in part be understood as pointing to the code through which perceptions of a particular cultural belonging are put in place through repetition and re-impressions. Through the juxtapositions of text and images, however, the work at the same time points towards the infinite perceptions beyond these codes; the realm in which potentialities and possibilities have not yet been fully formed, and remain eternally open to becoming actualised.

### Racial Modalities of Visuality

Turning the gaze toward the northern periphery of Europe at this same period in history, the archival tendencies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century arguably found their most persistent manifestation in contemporary ethnographic research, or what was to become the "racial sciences" (e.g. physiognomy and phrenology). Throughout the nineteenth century, a discourse on racial difference had been developing in Europe, which differed from earlier concepts of cultural identification in that physical distinctions came to be seen as the foundation of a supposedly scientific understanding of what made groups of people different from one another. The work of the eighteenth century scientist Comte de Buffon became highly influential on the anthropologists of the century to come. Earlier in the eighteenth century the botanist Carl von Linné had classified species according to a single criterion. Buffon, in contrast, argued that

in classifying humans, we should focus not just on skin-color, but also compare stature, physiognomy, hair-type, intelligence, and the whole configuration of physical and mental features.<sup>72</sup>

Buffon exerted a particular influence on the work of George Cuvier, who came to establish the field of comparative anatomy, which in turn provided the basis for the practices of physiognomy and phrenology that I mention above. Significantly, the relation between physical features and mental abilities were understood by the nineteenth century anthropologists as not only applicable to individuals

72. N. Hudson, "From Nation to Race – the Origin of Racial Classification in 18th-Century Thought", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29/3, Spring 1996, pp. 247–264.

but to groups of people.<sup>73</sup> Nicholas Hudson describes how the first recognisably modern definition of race appears in a French dictionary in 1835: “A multitude of men who originate from the same country, and resemble each other by facial features and by exterior conformity.”<sup>74</sup> Race by this definition, which, in addition to physical features also expanded to include mental features, came to form the basis of the growing field of ethnographic research as it was practiced toward the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the next. The Swedish anatomist Anders A. Retzius came up with the classification of so-called “long-skulls” and “short-skulls” to distinguish between different races, in which the former were considered part of a higher race and the latter part of a separate and less intelligent race.<sup>75</sup> Not only were they considered separate, but interbreeding of people of different races was seen as unnatural and even dangerous. Through comparisons of, for example, horses and donkeys, it was believed that interbreeding led to bastardisation, sterile offspring and eventually to “extinction.”<sup>76</sup> As nature itself would see to it that the “low” races succumbed, this in itself was not a subject of concern for the researchers. In terms of the higher races, however, there was a great risk of “contamination” and it was important that measures were taken to prevent such interbreeding as much as possible, in particular in those places like northern Scandinavia, where different “races” cohabited.

At the same time as racial sciences developed, spread and increasingly took on a mission to prove the theory that humanity consisted of different races and that these could be measured through anthropometric studies, photographic technologies developed to produce more practical and transportable equipment that could be brought along on research missions. Inevitably, the camera became one of the main techniques through which the supposed differences between races were to be documented, and through which the new modalities of visuality described here were put into place. In particular after André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri’s invention of the paper *cart de visite* in 1854, which made possible the mass production of photographs, photography became an indispensable part

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., p. 247.

75. Maja Hagerman, *Det rena landet: Om konsten att uppfinna sina förfäder* (Stockholm: Prisma, 2006).

76. Heidi Hansson and Jan-Erik Lundström, *Looking North: Representations of Sámi in Visual Arts and Literature* (Umeå: Bildmuseet, Umeå universitet, 2008).

of the anthropology of race.<sup>77</sup> The technology became crucial not only as a supposedly objective tool for recording physical characteristics, but, as with the photographs of Ottoman “types” discussed above, made possible the proliferation of these images amongst the general public. As the scientific foundation of the racial sciences began to crumble (already in the nineteenth century), the visualisations of these ideas turned the notion of race into something concrete and observable for the general public, as a manner of enfolded that came to be seen as natural and inevitable because of their “verification” in scientific research and photographic documentation. As cultural theorist Cathrine Baglo writes, through the photographic technologies, “[o]ne could see in what way non-western people were different; how “typical” or “primitive” they were.”<sup>78</sup> Baglo goes on to quote anthropologist Deborah Poole, who describes how

without any clear-cut basis in either biology or physical appearance, “race” must be constantly reinvented, reinvoked, and resurrected by being incessantly spoken of, referred to, defined, and denied.<sup>79</sup>

As such, the photographic technologies played a crucial part in creating the differences that the researchers set out to find; differences that lived on as complexities of visuality in the minds of the general public long after their scientific foundation had been disproven.

In 1921, however, the theories of racial difference were still highly reputable and Sweden became the first country in the world to open a State Institute for Racial Biology. The Swedish physician Herman Lundborg was appointed head of the Institute, which under his leadership began collecting anthropometric statistics and photographs to map the racial makeup of the Swedish population. Of particular interest to Lundborg and the Institute were the Sami populations of northern Sweden. Since the beginning of racial research in the eighteenth century, the Sami, along with other indigenous populations across the world, were classified as a lower race.<sup>80</sup> Between 1922 and 1935 Lundborg went on a

77. Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

78. Cathrine Baglo, “From Universal Homogeneity to Essential Heterogeneity: On the Visual Construction of the Lappish Race”, *Acta Borealia* 18/2, 2001, p. 32.

79. Quoted in *ibid.*

80. As for example by A. H. Keane, “The Lapps: Their Origin, Ethnical Affinities, Physical and



number of research trips to Swedish Sápmi to measure and document the Sami populations of Sweden. More than 12,000 archival photographs remain from this research. It is the investigation of this material that informs the work of Swedish-Sami artist Katarina Pirak Sikku.

#### *The traces of the nameless*

Unlike many other artists engaging with archival photographs, only one work from Pirak Sikku's extensive oeuvre contains actual images from the archives. The other works that stem from her engagement with the archive are made up of her own photographs of the spaces in which the research was carried out, drawings of archival photographs, drawings of herself in the poses used in the original documentations, lists of measurements from the actual research, and an installation of her own experience of visiting the documentation sites. The works have been exhibited together under the title *Namaheamiid luottat – De namnlösa spår* (The Traces of the Nameless).<sup>81</sup> The artist expresses her reluctance to exhibit images from the archive, even images of the researchers themselves.<sup>82</sup> She describes how, at first, she felt much anger and resentment toward the researchers. However, after a long and slow process of working through her own engagement with the material, she felt able to consider them with a different kind of understanding; an appreciation of the researchers as participants in a larger, highly dangerous modality, which at the time they may or may not have been completely convinced by. The artist describes an emotional journey beginning with anger and shame but growing with time into a more nuanced scale of a number of emotions and affects; feelings that, as she explains, don't have any words and therefore look to be expressed in other ways.

As mentioned, and like several other contemporary photographers and artists working with photography, Pirak Sikku finds one way to approach these events is to take large-scale photographs of the landscapes in which the research was carried out, but which today reveal no signs of the events themselves. In

Mental Characteristics, Usages, Present Status, and Future Prospects", *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 15, 1886.

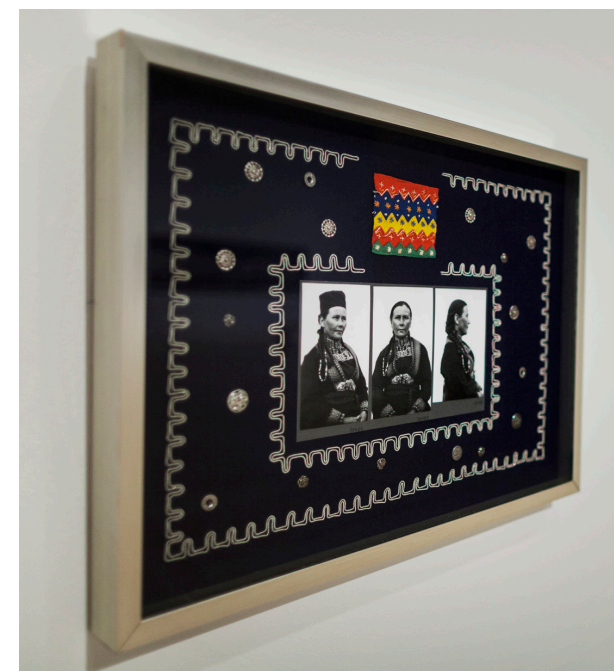
81. The works have been exhibited in several places. However, in talking about particular exhibited pieces I refer to the exhibition with this title held at Upplandsmuseet in Uppsala, December 2015–May 2016.

82. This and the rest of the paragraph is derived from a conversation with the artist, December 2015.

chapter six, I delve further into Pirak Sikku's landscape photographs, as a part of a discussion of so-called *late photography* and the role of the physical body in engaging with historical trauma in the present. Pirak Sikku explains how, in her process of engaging, it was important for her to go back to the actual physical sites at which the research was conducted. She talks about the significance of the very act of walking, of one's own physical body moving along and sitting in, breathing, looking, smelling the spaces in which the events that she is trying to work through took place. She explains her sense that nature and physical objects themselves carry memories – memories that she processes in her work, as she walks through the landscapes and continues to work through the stories that underlie the images. For now, however, I remain with the work that includes actual photographs from the archive.

The photographs in this piece are of a woman named Anna, the aunt of Elsa Teilus, who in turn is a friend of Pirak Sikku's family that accompanied her on some of the journeys to the lands in which the research was undertaken. Pirak Sikku describes how Elsa recognised her aunt Anna in one of the images whilst they looked together through some of the archival images. In the piece, there are three images of Anna taken in accordance with the standardisation protocol of all of the images from the archive: one from the front, one from an angle and one from the side. (fig. 7) In them, Anna is wearing traditional Sami clothing. In the first image she wears a hat whilst in the other two you can see her hair, which is pulled back, braided, decorated, and hangs down her right shoulder. She sits proudly and

7) Katarina Pirak Sikku, *Anná siessá* (Aunt Anna) 2014. Courtesy of Polly Yassin and the artist



her expression is stern, but not unsympathetic. According to the artist, it was the pride and beauty of the subject, who at that time she had not identified, that made her want to take the images from the categorising and systematising space of the archive and out into the world. In the archival images, the three black and white photographs are attached to grey cardboard paper. There is an identification number below each image that corresponds to the anthropometric measurements found elsewhere in the archives. Pirak Sikku explains how, while Elsa had previously said she had no memories of being part of the research, when she saw the image of her aunt, the memories of herself being measured and documented as a child returned: “I was cold,” she said, “we were freezing”.<sup>83</sup> Seeing the images as well as physically going back to the places in which the measurements and photographs were taken brought back the embodied memories of the experience that she had otherwise forgotten.

In *Raw Histories*, Edwards talks about how photographs constitute “little narratives”, situated in the particular experiences of individuals. As she explains, these “little narratives” are “constituted by and are constitutive of the ‘grand,’ or at least ‘larger,’ narratives”.<sup>84</sup> In much photographic theory as it developed throughout the last century, the focus has not been on photographs themselves and the specific instances through which they are made, re-made, or experienced. Rather, it has been the larger narratives, the theoretical models, or modalities, through which photography’s social and political function and its relation to forces of power have been attempted to be explained, that have been the object of scrutiny. It is furthermore possible to make a connection between these little narratives and writer and Auschwitz survivor Charlotte Delbo’s notions of *deep* and *common memory*. Similar to Edwards’ notion of little and grand narratives above, Delbo makes a distinction between common memory and deep memory.<sup>85</sup> In her writings, common memory normalises the personal, the painful and the unacceptable, as an “external memory” that resides in the intellect, in and through language. Deep memory, on the other hand, is described as a sensory faculty, or “an organic tissue”.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, while common memory places

events in a temporal framework, with a present and a past that are spoken of in the present, and a clear distinction between these two, deep memory resides in a perpetual present. Through common memory, we are able to create narratives that describe the past as linear and historical, while evoking deep memory is described as a kind of sensory recall, where the emotional and sensory details of a particular event are sensed by the body. This becomes particularly potent in the case of Elsa’s meeting with her aunt’s image, through which emerges an apparent embodied and sensorial memory of her own experience of being documented and measured. As I have pointed out, photography functions in multiple and even contrary ways. It has the power to categorise, define, and exclude, at times violently, aspects of human experience, in particular through archival practices. Yet it also has the potential to unfold new affective engagements with these practices. As Edwards puts it, “photography has the potential for critique in precisely those spaces to whose representational practices it has contributed so forcefully in the past”.<sup>87</sup>

Presenting the images as they are, however, risks perpetuating the structures through which they were defined and categorised in the archive by transferring them into the new space of the gallery. Therefore, Pirak Sikku describes a desire to “bring back” Anna into the realm of a different kind of belonging. She makes a pewter thread embroidered frame for the images and includes a piece of the traditional clothing that Elsa wore on the day of being documented in the frame. The act of embroidering the frame with her own hands can be seen as an act of caring for Anna’s memory, of bringing her back from the cold, scientific, rational space of the archive into the warm and cared-for space that she creates for her. In feminist political theorist Nira Yuval-Davis’ discussion on the politics of belonging in globalised societies, the author places much emphasis on the ethics of care, and “the extent to which caring and love can counteract other emotions as the normative basis of political action”.<sup>88</sup> The question that Yuval-Davis explores through this focus is, as she explains, not a question of “whether one belongs or not, but rather how”.<sup>89</sup> For her this *how* is inevitably a question of emotions

83. Bildmuseet, ‘Katarina Pirak Sikku,’ Interview, 6 Feb, 2014 <https://vimeo.com/86000029> accessed 23 November 2016.

84. Edwards, *Raw Histories*, p. 3.

85. In chapter six I return to the concept of trauma and carry out a more in-depth discussion of this notion.

86. Heidi Grunebaum and Yazir Henri, “Re-memembering Bodies, Producing Histories” in Jill

Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (eds), *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time* (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 107.

87. Edwards, *Raw Histories*, p. 3.

88. Nira Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations* (London: Sage, 2011), p. 178.

89. Ibid.

and physicality. Yuval-Davis brings up a number of authors (including Carol Gilligan, Eric Gregory and Virginia Held) who emphasise an “ethics of care” as a way of criticising common liberal discourse which “find little room for affectivity and emotions except as natural energies to be constrained by reason”.<sup>90</sup>

In the case of Pirak Sikku’s piece, the work of caring is carried out for the material images of Anna rather than for a physical body. Nevertheless, or perhaps *because* of this focus on the images, it becomes a way of working through the feelings of shame, anger and sadness that both Pirak Sikku and Elsa talk about in relation to the archival images and the project of which these were a part. Elsewhere, Elsa describes the feelings of shame surrounding the process of being measured and documented: “We were embarrassed about being ‘lapps’. It was something ugly”.<sup>91</sup> As Yuval-Davis points out, “the politics of belonging involve the full range of human emotions and passions, from pain and grieving, via fear and disgust, to shame and love”.<sup>92</sup> When Pirak Sikku’s work was exhibited in Uppsala in 2015, the place where the State Institute of Racial Biology was once situated and where the archive is still kept, two unopened albums from the archive were included in the exhibition. Both albums were placed in wrapping, which the artist produced from the same warm material as traditional Sami clothing, and one of the albums is also wrapped in Elsa’s own belt. (fig. 8) Taking the albums from the archival spaces and wrapping them up in warm clothing made with her own hands becomes an act of caring for the people that were documented. Significantly, Pirak Sikku explains how, throughout the process of engaging with the archive and the events of its production, feelings of anger and shame gradually diminished and were replaced by other more nuanced feelings and questions. Lundborg as an individual or perpetrator became less significant. Instead, the societal structure which made the invention of such a “science” came into focus. Was the research experienced as an assault at the time, or was it only afterwards, when the wider implications of the attitudes that underpinned the studies become evident, that they came to be surrounded by shame and anger?

90. Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 151.

91. Katarina Pirak Sikku, “Vi var generade över att vara lappar. Det var fullt: Elsas vittnesmål om Rasbiologiska Institutets undersökningar av samiska barn vid Nomadskolan i Vaikijaur, Jokkmokk”, Symposium recording, 6 May 2016, <<https://media.medfarm.uu.se/play/kanal/237>>, accessed 15 November 2016.

92. Yuval-Davis, *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*, p. 178.



Through her engagement, Pirak Sikku brings into motion a highly emotional process of unfolding in which new questions and perceptions appear and come to form the next step in her process of working with this archive.

#### *Embodied memories*

Another artist who also works with her heritage in Sami culture is Swedish-Sami artist Liselotte Wajsted. She works through memories that are significant for her own life by a process of incorporating old photographs with traditional Sami clothing that she makes herself. While relating to her identity as a Sami through the craft that she chooses to work with, the memories that she deals with are personal, relating to the life of her grandmother and the ways in which her grandmother’s choices have affected the artist’s own life. The installation *The Lost One* (2014) consists of a movie, an audio recording of a

8) Katarina Pirak Sikku, Detail from the exhibition *Nama-beamiid luottat (Traces of the nameless)* at Upplandsmuseet, 2015. Courtesy of the artist



9) Liselotte Wajstedt,  
*The Lost One*, 2014.  
Foto: Lisa Kejonen  
© Liselotte Wajstedt



story told by the artist, a photograph, and a piece of clothing, a *kolt*, that she made.<sup>93</sup> (fig. 9) Through the film and the narrative, we come to understand that the images that we see on the kolt are printed from photographs taken from her grandmother's photo album. Wajstedt explains how she sewed the clothing for her grandmother with her grandmother's own sewing machine. Furthermore, she explains how she wanted to tell the story of the female heritage of her family, how her grandmother's action influenced the life of her mother, which in turn played a part in shaping her own life. Wajstedt describes the feeling of sewing with her grandmother's sewing machine as a "magical" process, having to unravel and sew again, as an ongoing conversation between two women of two different times, carried out through the act of handcraft.<sup>94</sup> As in Pirak Sikku's piece above, we see a material, embodied and emotional process of engaging with the past. The photographs become a part of this slow engagement, which unfolds not so much stories of the past, but the often-wordless deep memories that reside in the body rather than the intellect. The movie that accompanies the piece includes the question "who are you without your words?" and suggestions

93. A *kolt* is a traditional Sami costume, often worn on ceremonial occasions.

94. Bildmuseet, "Liselotte Wajstedt / *The Lost One*", Interview, 9 July 2016, <https://vimeo.com/100306392> accessed 23 October 2016.

of an answer: "I am an image of all that you have and all your previous choices have shaped me." The answer to the question and to the engagement as a whole comes from the very process within which it is worked through, and the archival photographs are unfolded in this material, affective realm, rather than brought out to be explained through generalised narratives of belonging.

Returning to the works of Pirak Sikku, another photograph shows the artist measuring herself with an actual measuring tool that was used in the research some hundred years earlier. (fig. 10) The photograph is taken in the green summer landscape of Sápmi and the artist is dressed in traditional Sami clothing and seated in front of a white sheet.<sup>95</sup> With one hand, she holds the tool to her head, as if in the process of measuring her own head size. As Pirak Sikku herself says, she cannot go back in time to feel what the people who were made into the object of the research felt then. Even as she tries the measurement device on herself, and documents this process, she cannot make assumptions about how her own feelings in the present relate to the historical events themselves.



10) Katarina Pirak  
Sikku, *From the exhibition*  
*Namabeamiid luottat* (*Traces of the*  
*nameless*) at Upp-  
landsmuseet, 2015.  
Courtesy of Måridjá  
Pirak Sikku and the  
artist

95. In an earlier version of the image, the same process was documented in an indoor setting. However, as Pirak Sikku learned through her research that the archival images were in fact taken in an outdoor setting, with a white sheet against the landscape as showed in the image, she remade the image accordingly. From a conversation with the artist, December 2015.

Nevertheless, one of the questions that she carried with her into the process that included the archive visits, the trips to the places where the research was carried out, and the handwork that cared for the image of Elsa, was the question of shame and whether or not shame can be inherited through generations. This is the very same question that is found at the centre of cultural theorist Marianne Hirsh's concept of postmemory, which she most notably puts to use in relation to family photographs of the children of survivors of the Holocaust. Postmemory, for Hirsh, describes the experiences of those whose lives are shaped by stories of events that happened before their own existence. As Hirsh describes, the concept involves "stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor created".<sup>96</sup> While the notion of postmemory is highly significant in relation to the anthropometric research on the Sami population, as a way of bringing our attention to how these events live on in the present, it is important to note Pirak Sikku's own reflection on the very lack of stories about these events in her own and other Sami's childhoods.<sup>97</sup> Until very recently, the memories of these events have lived on silently, often shamefully repressed in the communities that were affected by them, and by and large wilfully ignored by general society that passively or actively supported the research. Pirak Sikku has described her own research into the archives, with regard to both the photographic material and, particularly, the written documentation. Since there is nothing written from the perspective of the Sami populations, she tried to read between the lines of the letters to get an idea of the feelings and attitudes of the people that were made into the objects of the research.<sup>98</sup> All the same, Hirsch's concept of postmemory is a highly useful tool for approaching the events and patterns that Pirak Sikku works through in her artworks and her own research. Hirsch distinguishes it from general historical memory in that it

96. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 22.

97. For Pirak Sikku's own reflections on this, see Bildmuseet, "Katarina Pirak Sikku."

98. She finds very little to answer her many questions, but at one point she does discover a passage in which Lundborg writes about how his work would be easier if the Sami people were more compliant. He also describes how one family came to be documented by their own accord, which makes him hope that others will follow their lead. From these passages it is possible to deduce that there was a resistance to the research. Nevertheless, the stories describing this resistance and the experience from the Sami perspective are missing. From a conversation with the artist, December 2015.

involves a deep personal involvement. Furthermore, she describes postmemory as a particularly powerful form of memory in that "its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation".<sup>99</sup> It is a memory that is continually created through stories and other memory acts throughout someone's life, and it is in a large part dependent on the willingness of those carrying this postmemory to invest in it and recreate it in the present. Significantly, photographs are for Hirsh "precisely the medium connecting first- and second-generation remembrance, memory, and postmemory".<sup>100</sup> In the material that Pirak Sikku works with, many of the photographs connected to the historical events remain in the archive and are not reinvested with meaning in the sense that Hirsh describes. Others can be found in personal photo albums or framed on walls in people's houses, while the historical events involved in their creation are rarely passed on or reinvested in. Nevertheless, what remains significant about the notion of postmemory in relation to Pirak Sikku's work is how, through working with the archival photographs, she involves herself in a deeply personal way with traumatic events of history that can never be entirely understood but that nevertheless shape lives in the present. In this way, she opens up the possibility of a different kind of imaginative investment in relation to both the material and the events.

In addition to the photograph of Pirak Sikku measuring herself, another of her works shows a much-enlarged list of measurements like those collected by the researchers, including the head measurements and other anthropometric data. At the top of the list, Pirak Sikku includes her own name in a process of once again positioning herself as the object of research, here reducing her own being into anthropometric data on a chart. Going back to Derrida's understanding of the two principles of the archive, namely commencement and commandment, the anthropometric data claims precisely to not only provide facts, but to provide the authority that determines how and from where these descriptions are to be carried out. Taking the Derridean conceptualisations of the archive one step further, there is a violence that is reduced, forgotten and destroyed through the act of archiving. Much care and love is needed in the engagement with these memories, to unfold the reductions of the research and archival processes into the infinities of lived experience.

99. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, p. 22.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

## Conclusion

I began this chapter with a theoretical discussion of different reflections around archival energies; in the form of the idea of modalities or complexities of visuality, the material photographic archives of the last two centuries, the all-encompassing tendencies of Allan Sekula's shadow archives, and Jacques Derrida's reflections on archival processes of unifying, identifying and classifying events through repetition. With the help of Jacques Rancière, I also touched upon how the classifications of these archival energies are connected to sense perceptions, forming what is presented to us as experience. In many of these ideas, however, I pointed out how there is also an attention to contrasting energies, and suggested the aesthetic of enfolding/unfolding as a way to approach the process of opening up new understandings and perceptions from particular archives.

In the case of orientalist modalities, whose patterns were to a large extent put into place throughout the eighteenth century, I looked at İnci Eviner's engagements as a way of mobilising patterns that have become stagnant through history. I also brought up a work by İpek Duben who works with juxtapositions that break down the code of what has seemingly been put into place, and which thereby are able point to the realm in which potentialities and possibilities have not yet been fully formed. In relation to racial modalities that also to a large extent took shape throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, I discussed how works of Katarina Pirak Sikku (and Liselotte Wajstedt) broach the role that embodied emotions play in these processes of unfolding, and the role that love and acts of care play in working through affectively charged memories of the past. It is interesting to note here that, while orientalist patterns of perceiving have been a topic of much interest and focus within academia and the art world for about half a century, (post)colonial discussions in a Swedish or Nordic context have been much delayed and have only surfaced in the last decade or so.<sup>101</sup> Forerunners like Pia Arke can be seen to have begun a process of

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101. In 2006, the postcolonial exhibition project *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism* cast the colonial history of the Nordic region as "a dark chapter that seems to have slipped the memory of many of the Nordic populations. Although it continues to make itself very much felt in the region's former colonies, this history is alarmingly absent in the collective memory of the once-colonizing Nordic countries." "Rethinking Nordic Colonialism", <<http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org>>, accessed 1 June 2014.

unfolding of colonial history in Scandinavia, engaging from different perspectives with the colonial history of Greenland.

In relation to the discussion so far, I have paid much attention to archival energies and how these function to create patterns that determine how we see, feel, and experience the world. I have argued that photographs are often talked about in terms of their ability to participate in these processes, something that is strengthened by photography's apparent potential for objective documentation.<sup>102</sup> However, much remains to be said about the processes through which photographs unfold into experience, and the possibilities, which, I argue, are always and inevitably there, of experiencing this unfolding according to different or alternative patterns. In the next chapter, I stay with the idea of archival notions, looking more closely at the notion of modernity and particular patterns connected to it. In relation to some of the works analysed here, I continue to pay more attention to the relationship between photographs and experience from a non-representative perspective.

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102. While the belief in the ability for objective documentation has been drastically weakened throughout the last decades, it nevertheless remains as an affective association within many areas where photography is used.

## Unfolding Modernity

*In which I remain with the notion of the archive and the possibility of unfolding new perceptions from historically constructed archives. I consider three artists and photographers who can be seen to look back at different aspects of utopian notions of modernity. The first part of the chapter looks at the early days of the Turkish Republic and what is revealed about this time through the work of Gülsün Karamustafa. The second part focuses on Sweden as well as more global patterns of modernity, as unfolded through the work of Lina Selander and Mats Eriksson. Throughout the chapter, I make further use of the idea of unfolding as a way to approach these engagements with the archive.*

### Modernisation, Modernity, Modernism

Before moving on to particular examples, I want to stay for a moment with the notion of modernity. Modernity is a mammoth concept within academic discussions, and I will not try to do justice to the scope of it here. Rather, I will bring attention to some aspects of the notion that are of relevance to the works discussed below. According to philosopher Marshall Berman, modernity can be periodised into three phases.<sup>103</sup> Berman refers to the period from around 1500 to 1789 as early modernity. The following period, roughly 1789–1900, is described as

103. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1988), p. 19.

classical modernity and saw the invention and development of modern technologies such as photography as well as an intensification of faith in scientific, social and technological progress. This period can be seen as the focus of the previous chapter. According to Berman's periodization, the present chapter concerns itself with the period of late modernity, which Berman describes as beginning around 1900. In particular, it focuses on the future-oriented attitude that came to be expressed principally through architecture and different social engineering projects at this time. Intensified faith in the ideals of rationality, efficiency, and a homogeneous and harmonious social body are examples of the attitude that many of these projects aimed to manifest. Involved in many of these ideals is a utopian idea of breaking with the past and bringing about something new and better. This is something to which I shall be returning to below. As I explained in the last chapter, and will continue to discuss in this one, photographic technologies played a significant role in many of these projects. Sociologist Anthony Giddens describes this time period as being guided by "the idea of the world as open to transformation, by human intervention."<sup>104</sup> Unlike Giddens and Berman, who write about modernity as a European (possibly North American) phenomenon, however, I take it on here rather as a global condition that takes root in various cultural locations around the world. In fact, as will become clear, modernity as a multifaceted global condition is precisely what is revealed in several of the works below.

In parts of the chapter, I make use of a distinction between the terms modernisation, modernity, and modernism. While modernisation describes the transformation of the material world and social organisations that take place in different parts of the world during the time periods that I discuss, modernity can be understood as the attitudes or spirit that infuses these transformations; a code if you like, as I began to touch upon in chapter one. Modernism, in turn, is often used to refer to the different trends of art (including literature, fine arts, and architecture) that developed during the later parts of the periods of modernity. In addition to the periodization above, Giddens describes modernity as a society that (Giddens and Pierson 1998) "unlike any preceding culture, lives in the future."<sup>105</sup> Cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen similarly describes the

104. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 94.

105. Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 94.



focus of the early twentieth century as being more commonly directed toward imaginations of the future.<sup>106</sup> Contemporary culture, in contrast, is described by Huyssen, together with Hal Foster, Pierre Nora, and others, in terms of a general obsession with *memory*.<sup>107</sup> While I am bringing to attention here a difference between modern and contemporary conditions, in relation to the discussion to follow, the significance lies rather in the continuation between them.<sup>108</sup> From this perspective, the “obsession with memory” that Huyssen and others write about becomes yet another expression of an attitude that looks to repeatedly structure and order the world as we know it. Remaining with Huyssen’s idea for a moment, however, the argument is that the “technological change, mass media, and new patterns of consumption, work, and global mobility” of the last decades have transformed spatial and temporal experiences, creating what he refers to as a “crisis of temporality”.<sup>109</sup> The increased movement creates a fear of forgetting, a fear of the entities and identities through which we define ourselves and others becoming obsolete, and of the past as we know it disappearing. This in turn is described as being counteracted by an obsession with acts of remembering: “Our secular culture today is in the grips of such fear and terror of forgetting, and tries to counteract this fear with strategies of memorialisation”.<sup>110</sup> According to this argument, memory is called upon to counteract the fear of obsolescence, by creating a never-ending stream of illusions of the past. Derrida describes how we are all today *en mal d’archive*, in need of archives that compulsively repeat, re-produce and re-impress versions of the past. Even when there is too much of it, Derrida explains, there is a

compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement.<sup>111</sup>

This longing, furthermore, is not just a longing for past utopias, but for confirmation of identity in the present. As Derrida puts it, the archive “orders repetition, and first of all self-repetition, self-confirmation in a yes, yes”.<sup>112</sup> The “yes, yes” here describes the desire to continue this repetition and to keep having it confirmed. As will become clear, the works that I look at below can be understood in part as in different ways going against the attitudes, obsessions or compulsions to confirm and repeat, unfolding alternative understandings and experiences to these constructed patterns.

### Nostalgia for the Modern

In *Nostalgia for the Modern*, anthropologist Esra Özyürek describes a nostalgic vision of modernity at work in Turkey, which can be discovered in the common memory of the founding of the Turkish Republic in the wake of the First World War. Özyürek explains a longing amongst secularist Turkish modernists for the authoritarian model of modernity of the 1930s. Amongst the subjects of her research, this model is seen as a modern past utopia in which the state and its subjects were united.<sup>113</sup> Since contemporary Kemalist Turks, who she describes as abiding by this vision, are unable to find the modernity that they aspire to in the neo-liberal (turned authoritarian) present, and in particular since an Islamic government came to power, they often turn to the past for their desired model of modernity. While Özyürek recognises the complex irony of this nostalgic vision of modernity, she explains it as a relatively common expression of non-Western modernity, in which “large groups of people yearn

106. Andreas Huyssen, “Trauma and Memory: A New Imaginary of Temporality”, in Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (eds.), *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 16–29.

107. See Hal Foster, “Trauma Culture”, *artnet* <[http://www.artnet.com/magazine\\_pre2000/features/foster/foster7-26-96.asp](http://www.artnet.com/magazine_pre2000/features/foster/foster7-26-96.asp)> accessed 2 April 2012; Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire”, *Representations*, 26, 1989.

108. I am choosing here to use the term *contemporary* rather than *late modern* (or *postmodern*) to refer to the time period from the last decades of the twentieth century until today. This is to separate the time period from Giddens’ distinctions in which *late modern* is used to describe the period of the entire twentieth century. Also, in their analysis, Huyssen and Foster both refer to *contemporary* culture. (I do not refer to *post-modernity* since my aim is not to show some kind of radical break from modernity.)

109. Huyssen, “Trauma and Memory: A New Imaginary of Temporality”, p. 16.

110. Ibid.

111. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 57.

112. Ibid., p. 51.

113. Rather than, as Özyürek describes it, a time in which “an all-powerful and homogenizing state... suppressed local identities, demands and economies”. Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 11.

for bygone days and imagine a pristine past in which each individual society united around a common goal”.<sup>114</sup> Referring to the research of political scientist Oliver Roy and anthropologist Lisa Rofel respectively, she points out how not only Kemalists in Turkey, but Islamic activists in Afghanistan and discontented post-reform workers in China nostalgically look back at the past of their own societies, since modernity as they came to know it has been unable to realise its potential for a better and freer life.

In Turkey, Özyürek recognises how the common memory of the 1930s as a modern past utopia repeats itself as a protection against the apparent threats of the present, through images and narratives claiming to speak of the past. One of the most influential practitioners to participate in the construction of the modalities of visibility as they were construed during the first decades of the Republic was the Austrian-born photographer Othmar Pferschy. In 1934, Pferschy was appointed as official photographer of the propagandistic publication *La Turquie Kemaliste*, which was distributed internationally to promote the image of Turkey as a modern nation.<sup>115</sup> Significantly, a year before, the General Directorate of Press, which had previously been under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was reorganised under the Ministry of Interiors.<sup>116</sup> The production of *La Turquie Kemaliste* in this context was thus a part of a larger mission to re-create both the self-image and perceptions of Turkey from the outside as a modern nation, and to this end the directorate needed “a photographic archive of the country”.<sup>117</sup> The archive, which was used for propagandistic publications such as *La Turquie Kemaliste* as well as for travelling exhibitions, included a number of themes, namely “the documentation of the country and her cultural wealth, the depiction of its industrial achievements, the building of Ankara, and finally the representation of the Turkish people”.<sup>118</sup> As I discussed in the last chapter, in the images produced during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the camera was often directed toward apparently timeless and picturesque individuals and

114. Ibid., pp. 8–9.

115. See Engin Özden, “In the Light of the Republic: The Photographs of Othmar Pferschy”, in Istanbul Modern (ed.), *Photography Exhibitions* (Istanbul: Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2006).

116. Bülent Batuman, “Photography at Arms: ‘Early Republican Ankara’ from Nation-Building to Politics of Nostalgia”, *METU JFA*, 2, 2008, p. 102.

117. Ibid., p. 102.

118. Ibid., p. 103.



scenes. In contrast to these images, in the new archive of the nation, people were mostly shown in groups, dressed similarly in modern clothes, mostly young, and always in the process of producing or doing something.<sup>119</sup> (fig. 11)

11) Othmar Pferschy, *Turkish Girls under the Republic* 1936–37

#### *Interweaving histories*

In what follows, I look at three works by Turkish artist Gülsün Karamustafa that relate to this era in Turkish history. One of her works, *Le visage Turc* (1998), was made some years before the time period that is my main focus. However, it is worth a brief mention, since it involves the artist appropriating photographs from one of the propagandistic publications mentioned above. The photographs are taken from a publication of *La Turquie Kemaliste* from 1938 and can be seen as aiming to reinforce the newly defined role of women in Turkey. The photographs are black and white and show three separate portraits of girls at different

119. Özden, “In the Light of the Republic: The Photographs of Othmar Pferschy”.

12) Gülsün Karamustafa, *Le Visage Turc*, 3 digital prints on forex, 139 x 100 cm (each) (installation view from Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe) 1998. Courtesy of the artist and Büro Sarigedik



ages. (fig. 12) The girls are dressed in modern clothing and have modern hairstyles. They bring to mind a national socialist aesthetics common to the time, in which the focus is apparently on showing the health and strength of the people of the nation (and/or race). The girls themselves, their features and demeanour, clothes and hairstyles, as well as the way they are portrayed – smiling to the camera, leisurely walking along the beach, or a light-haired baby girl with one finger in her mouth – all seem to reinforce the notion of European belonging. The aim of the series seems to be to suggest to the reader that Turks have a European physiognomy.<sup>120</sup> In the piece, the artist enlarges the images to larger-than-life size and creates a triptych from the appropriated photographs, across which the text *Le visage Turc* (The Turkish Face) is written.<sup>121</sup> Karamustafa thereby brings these largely forgotten images into the present to see what kind

120. As described by Edhem Eldem when analysing this particular set of images in relation to a discussion of Turkish and Ottoman Orientalism. He describes this self-orientalising tendency as wanting 'to do away with Islam, with tradition, with the Orient, with primitiveness. Its dream was to become modern, secular, homogenous, united, and – white'. Edhem Eldem, 'Ottoman and Turkish Orientalism', *Architectural Design*, 80/1, 2010, p. 28.

121. As I return to below, one of the most drastic modernisation projects in the decade and a half leading up to this publication involved replacing the Arabic alphabet with Roman letters. The sentence in Karamustafa's piece is written in Roman letters but in a style that suggests

of new associations appear in this time and space. The way that photographic technology was used to reinforce idealisations and naturalisation of woman and childhood becomes apparent, as well as the kind of race-ideals of the early twentieth century. Reproducing, enlarging and displaying these images in the present unfold an understanding of the strong influence that these also had in Turkey at the time. As I develop further in relation to other works below, the piece can be seen to reveal the ideals of modernity as a global condition, but at the same time complex and fragmented in its expression in particular projects of modernisation.

Another more recent work by Karamustafa, *Modernity Unveiled – Interweaving Histories* (2010), also uses appropriated photographs, but this time unpublished material hitherto left unseen in an archive. The piece deals with the period leading up to, during, as well as following, the Second World War. During this period, as fascism made it impossible for many artists, architects, scholars and others to stay in Europe, Istanbul became a safe haven for some of these practitioners in exile.<sup>122</sup> Meanwhile, one of the most pressing concerns in Turkey at this time was illiteracy amongst the vast rural population. At this time, literacy in the nation as a whole was as low as twenty per cent, with the literate part of the population being almost entirely limited to the urban areas. What is more, as I touched upon in a footnote above, in an attempt to speed up the modernisation process in the new Republic, the old Ottoman Turkish script had been replaced by an extended version of the Latin alphabet, and even the literates of the nation had to be taught this new alphabet. One of the exiles to take refuge in Istanbul at this time was the German architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. Having left the Weimar Republic for Moscow in 1930, Schütte-Lihotzky came to Istanbul from Russia in 1938, as the political situation in Moscow made it impossible for her to stay there as well. In Istanbul, Schütte-Lihotzky became involved with Atatürk's educational reforms of the 1930s, as she was commissioned to design grade schools for the *Villages Institutes* in Anatolia. Inspired by the social engineering ideals of the time, including the modernist ideals of rationalisation and professionalization as a way to create a socially harmonious national community, these institutes were set up to train teachers from the

the influence of Arabic writing, revealing the intermingling, at times starkly contrasting, influences at this time.

122. The background history to this piece is described in the material accompanying its exhibition as well as in conversation with the artist conducted in September 2013.



urban parts of the nation, who would then return to their villages to set up new village schools. As a part of the pedagogical plan, in addition to their regular courses, the students of these institutes would be involved in constructing the school buildings and growing their own food.

During her residency in Vienna in 2010, Karamustafa came across the story of Schütte-Lihotzky's involvement with the Village Institutes, which led her to search for the architectural plans for these institutes as well as photographs of the students building the schools. She found this material at the Village Institute Photography Archive (Köy Enstitüleri Fotoğraf Arşivi) in Isparta, Turkey. In *Modernity Unveiled – Interweaving Histories* she brings together a quarter-scale structure of one of the schools that Schütte-Lihotzky designed with archival photographs of the people who originally built it. The wooden structure that she creates brings to mind utilitarian modernism. Many of the open frames of the construction are filled with large-scale black and white photographs from the archive. (fig. 13) As in the images by Pferschy above, the photographs show men and women in modern practical clothing engaged in the process of building or other tasks related to the Village Institute project. All the photographs show people in action, seemingly oblivious to the documentation, entirely focused on the work in which they are engaged. Like the images above, the photographs were seemingly made to highlight the modernisation project as a collective

13) Gülsün Karamustafa, *Modernity Unveiled*. Prints on forex, wood structure, 375 x 265 x 233 cm, photo by Chroma at Hamburger Bahnhof 2011. Courtesy of the artist and Büro Sarigedik



14) Gülsün Karamustafa, *Modernity Unveiled*. Prints on forex, wood structure, 375 x 265 x 233 cm, photo by Chroma at Hamburger Bahnhof 2011. Courtesy of the artist and Büro Sarigedik

mobilisation. In one of the pictures, we see two boys seated on top of a wooden structure similar to that of the installation. (fig. 14) The boys are dressed in modern work clothes, shorts or trousers and shirt with practical shoes and flat caps on their heads. They are both seated with one leg on either side of the top plank of the structure and both are holding some kind of tool in their hands. Their attention is on the work that one of the boys is carrying out on the plank. As in the other images, the focus is not on the boys as individuals, but as members of a collective. The focus is on the work that is carried out, as a project within the larger and more important process of modernisation. As Karamustafa explains, there is no evidence that the students built these precise structures. The purpose of the piece, however, is not so much a factual rendition of the events as they actually once took place, but rather to bring together the facts with the artist's imagination, in a reflection, as the title of the piece suggests, of the interweaving histories of modernity. The work can be seen as rather didactic in its attempt to bring forth a perception of modernity, and its particular modernisation projects, as interwoven processes, or of the character of Schütte-Lihotzky as a heroine in this particular project. At the same time, the three dimensional plywood construction, which you can walk around (and even into if you're not too tall),

plus the large-sized photographic prints focusing on the bodies that once may have built them, create a lived sense of an aspect of the history of modernity, which is otherwise rarely revealed.

In *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers*, art historian Kobena Mercer criticises the notion of “parallel histories” as a common reference within discussions of global art.<sup>123</sup> Mercer, like many others, brings up migration as a pressing concern in an era of globalisation. He points out how the art world is paying attention to the impact of these trends through the heightened focus on notions of difference and diversity in both international art markets and in the official policies of public institutions. In chapter three, I look more closely at these ideas through a number of works that direct the attention to migration in different ways. As Mercer explains, however, these trends are still often characterised by a de-historicised outlook that generally pays attention to “the contemporary” as an isolated phenomenon. From this perspective, diversity and difference become characteristics of the contemporary, while the historical presence of these notions is often left unexamined. Contrary to this perspective, Mercer argues for how a more “nuanced understanding of the *shared* historical past enriches the aesthetic experience of individual works and oeuvres that were previously overlooked.”<sup>124</sup> If “parallel histories” describes a perspective of separate nation states that may interact but which by and large develop independently from each other, recognising the shared historical past of different peoples across the globe pays attention to the way that diversity (or “interweaving”, as I discuss further below) has been present throughout all parts of global modernity. Mercer, furthermore, recognises photography in terms of its double function of spreading certain Western ideas across the world *and* as a means of self-reportage of non-Western locations in documenting the heterogeneity of modernity as it is constructed. What is more, Mercer criticises the aesthetics of “authenticity” as creating mutually exclusive categories of modernity, which take away the possibility of seeing modernity as a universal condition that takes root in various cultural locations around the world. Turning to the archive, and in particular photographic archives, is for Mercer what most powerfully reveals modernity as precisely a *shared enterprise*. As I have discussed, *Modernity Unveiled* can

123. Mercer is writing here more specifically of discussions by and amongst curators and critics of contemporary art exhibitions. Kobena Mercer, *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers* (London & Cambridge, Mass.: Iniva/MIT Press, 2008).

124. *Ibid.*, p. 8 (my emphasis).

be seen to reveal the phenomenon of modernity not as a singular project, but one with multifarious expressions, which were more often than not shared across the world. In their capacity to be reproduced, archival photographs in particular are able to unfold modernity as a shared enterprise as they bring the perceiver into an affective meeting with the complexity of events as they are rarely expressed through their national histories.

### *Memory of a Square*

In the following piece, the focus is less on giving a message of modernity as an interwoven enterprise. Rather, the piece brings a sense of how the personal, affective and embodied aspects are intertwined with the common narratives of the history to which that particular archival material relates. In the piece *Memory of a Square* (2005), Karamustafa works with archival images from 1930 to 1980 in two short films shown on parallel screens. (fig. 15) The archival images all show events that have taken place in Taksim Square in Istanbul. Karamustafa describes how she found the material amongst her own family’s collections as well as in second-hand bookshops and public archives (still images from the earlier



15) Gülsün Karamustafa, *Memory of a Square*. Two channel synchronized video, single channel audio 00:17:07 Installation view from Villa Struck / Munich, artist's archive, 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Büro Sarigedik

16) Gülsün Karamustafa, *Memory of a Square*. Two channel synchronized video, single channel audio 00:17:07 Photo by Cem Berk Ekinil at SALT Beyoğlu, 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Büro Sarigedik



decades, and after the seventies some moving ones as well).<sup>125</sup> In the work, the archival images are shown next to a screen with a film, made by the artist, of a family living its daily life amidst the often-violent events shown on the adjacent screen. In the beginning of the film, we see a woman and child sitting together flipping through the pages of a photo album, pointing and commenting on what they see. Meanwhile, the other screen shows early photographs of the erection of the statue in the square and people spending time in the square in a leisurely way. (fig. 16) The archival images move to more violent content, such as from events that came to be known as “Bloody Sunday” in 1969 and “Taksim Square Massacre” on labour day 1977. While these incidents at first seem to be separate from the everyday life lived by the family on the other screen, we start to see the unrest of the events of the square mirrored in the body language and interactions of the people in the movie.<sup>126</sup> We also see some of the archival material documenting happenings in the square return as personal images in the filmed

125. From conversation with the artist, September 2013.

126. In the event “Bloody Sunday” in 1969 leftist demonstrators clashed with rightist counter-demonstrators, resulting in the death of two people. In the “Taksim Square Massacre”, during Labour Day demonstrations 1977, an estimated 34 people were killed by shootings into the demonstrating crowds. See for example ‘Taksim Square Massacre’, *Alchetron* <<https://alchetron.com/Taksim-Square-massacre-4572122-W>>, accessed 28 August 2017.

photo album, as well as still shots from the film returning amongst the archival images. In one image we see a woman comforting her son while apparently listening to the sound of shots and turmoil from outside the apartment. Meanwhile, the other screen shows the archival images of the increasingly violent and bloody demonstrations that culminated in the Taksim Square Massacre. Through this juxtaposition it becomes apparent how the personal and the public are inextricably intertwined and how the photographs function at once as part of both a personal and collective memory. On the one hand, the documentation of the events of the square through photographs can be seen as the epitome of public memory. On the other hand, the film of the family living their lives as the public events take place comes across as an enactment of intimate everyday memory. While the archival material focuses on external events, and the facts concerning what took place at certain times in the square, the film portrays the physical and emotional interactions of the family members. At the same time, as has already been mentioned, the two parts are interconnected as the images from each part returns in the other. In the last chapter, I talked about Delbo’s distinction between common memory and deep memory. I discussed how photography can be seen as both participating in creating and cementing common memories, and in the opening up of deep memories. In *Memory of a Square*, both kinds of memories, to which photography is intrinsically connected, are revealed as interwoven. The archival material that is used in the piece can be seen to reveal events that speak of both the ideals of modernity, as expressed through some of the earlier footage, and a modernising process that became increasingly violent. What is more, it gives a sense of these events as residing both in the embodied memory of everyday life and in the common narratives through which history is generally told.

*Memory of a Square* takes on particular significance after the events of the summer of 2013 – as I shall go on to discuss in chapter four. During what became known as the Gezi protests, thousands of people participated in demonstrations, which began as protests against the replacement of one of the few green areas left in central Istanbul, the Gezi Park, with another shopping mall. The demonstrations continued and expanded as protests against the AKP-government’s, and in particular Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s, neo-liberal policies and increasingly authoritarian style of government. In *Memory of a Square*, the archive dealt with consists of historically analogue images found in second-hand shops, and private or public collections. In relation to the more



recent events, the archive can be understood rather in terms of an intermittent maelstrom of largely digital images that seem to take on a life of their own amidst the events in the square and elsewhere. In chapter four, I return to certain aspects of this tumult and how the flow of images create and break different kinds of belonging. The archive is understood here as a “filter” that the perceiver has to work through – a filter of economic and political structures that guides what and who is seen. Engaging with this archive becomes a way to take control and create new patterns out of the maelstrom of images that claim to speak for certain events or periods of history.

### This Misery of Light

In the second half of this chapter, I look at two Sweden-based artists who, in different ways, also unfold attitudes connected to modernist ideals and modernisation processes. In the previous chapter, I described how, in the aesthetics of unfolding, code is understood as constructed through continuously (actively or passively) sustaining a certain informational structure. Earlier, I referred to Derrida’s idea of a condition of being *en mal d’archive*, as an obsession to compulsively repeat, re-produce and re-impress versions of the past. As I went on to describe, this compulsion is not just a longing to repeat a particular version of the past, but a compulsion to confirm identity in the present; a longing for familiar structure and order, of recognisable identities and boundaries in a world where these are experienced by many as being under threat. In much of her work, Swedish artist Lina Selander takes on this impulse to sustain a certain informational structure, to confirm versions of the past, identity in the present, or that structure through which the illusion of the world as a unified whole is sustained. Selander carries out a profound process of unfolding of such informational codes in her work, the result often being that the very *impulse* itself, that obsession that Derrida and others speak of above, comes to the forefront.

Furthermore, as in Karamustafa’s work above, Selander can also be seen to unfold perceptions of modernity as a global phenomenon in some of her works. At the same time, the approaches of the two artists differ significantly. While Karamustafa engages more with particular concrete historical events that relate in one way or another to a Turkish history of modernity, Selander makes use of a plethora of different references in her pieces. Because of this, Selander’s

works cannot be understood as being about particular events of history, but rather a tendency, or, as I talked of in the last chapter, a code, which I argue can be related to attitudes of modernity in a more general sense. In the film *The Ceremony* (2016), Selander combines images and clips of Tutankhamen’s crypt and unbroken seal with the grave of Caspar Hauser and the entrance to the old Stasi headquarters of Berlin. But the film begins in Bredäng, a suburb of Stockholm, where the artist lives with her family. The work contains moving images that Selander took of the high-rise buildings in Bredäng. (fig. 17) To Swedes, the buildings are easily recognised as belonging to one of several so-called “Million Programme” areas that are found mostly in the suburbs of major cities in Sweden. This scheme concerns a number of projects carried out by the Swedish government between 1965 and 1974 with the aim of building a million new homes in locations close to major cities in Sweden. The project remains the most important housing development to date in Sweden. In the process, large parts of older homes that did not live up to the modernisation standard of the time were demolished. In Swedish political debates, the large multifamily buildings that were the result of these projects are stigmatised and frequently

17) Lina Selander,  
*The Ceremony Film*  
Still 2016. Courtesy  
of the artist





associated with a range of problems, often connected to debates around the integration of immigrants in Sweden. In chapter five I turn to a further Million Programme development in another part of Sweden, which appears in a work by Swedish photographer Hendrik Zeitler. The discussion then goes deeper into questioning the materiality of the buildings and the surrounding areas that are brought out through Zeitler's photographs. In this chapter, however, I focus on the question of how the unfolding of associations around Bredäng are connected to a wider grid of images, ideas, and information, as well as the possibility of disconnecting the place itself from this grid.

In the beginning of *The Ceremony*, prior to the images of Bredäng, there is a ripping sound and the title page of Olaus Rudbeck's *Atlantica* is shown, in which Rudbeck unfolds a piece of the earth's crust to reveal Sweden as the sunken Atlantis. (fig. 18) In a similarly unrealistic way, associations with places such as Bredäng are covered by layers and layers of mediated images and connotations that often have little or nothing to do with the actual suburb itself. In the piece, Selander unfolds a number of unexpected juxtapositions that reveal

18) Lina Selander,  
*The Ceremony*  
Film Still 2016.  
Courtesy of the  
artist



the commonly repeated associations around the area as a sliver of an intricate code that in turn connects it to all regions of the globalised world, and eventually the whole universe. In the initial shots of Bredäng, the camera travels at a fast pace along the many high-rise buildings. These structures are coloured two different shades of grey and seem to blend in with the grey cloud-filled sky behind. Snowflakes falling in front of the camera make the buildings, trees and sky behind blend into each other even more. The images of the buildings are followed by others, both still and moving, from Bredäng; some of the same buildings framed by a public art piece, or blurred by rain and fog, of the gardens and green spaces in the suburb (that I will show are also the focus of Zeitler's series), interiors of some of these buildings with torn down wallpaper, or left intact since the 70s, and of children's drawings of the area. Interjected between these different depictions are a number of seemingly random still and moving archival images from starkly different sources; the unbroken seal of Tutankhamen's grave and people descending into and exploring underground spaces; animated film clips where one of the characters is asked to repeat the word *nothing*; of a gathering in which crowds of people joyously tear up their Soviet passports and throw the papers up like confetti in the air; and, towards the end of the film, of animals and natural phenomena – a tiger, a butterfly, an erupting volcano, and clouds in different formations. The seemingly random images, however, all point to a certain order, while at the same time suggesting the possibility of breaking with and going beyond this order of things. The shots of the joyous ex-Soviets bring out how easily one world order is replaced by another, how we shift from being on one side of a seemingly world-defining border to the other, and how one set of information order can be replaced by another. As the camera travels across a blue digital grid on a black background a voice once again relates this to Bredäng and asks "*Bredäng – why does it have to be a mystery?*", apparently referring to the order (or that *modality of visibility* if you like) that makes us believe that we know something about this place through the mediated images and associations that surround and cover it. At the beginning of the film, in between the image of Rudbeck's *Atlantica* and the first moving images of Bredäng, are two photographs from Russia showing people tied to poles and shot by firing squad. The photographs are black and white and intensely visceral. You can feel the weight of the lifeless bodies as they strain the ropes that stop them from falling to the ground, and sense the contrast between the doubled over corpses and those living bodies that presumably stood facing

the gun barrel a moment earlier. The intense physicality of the dead bodies becomes a reminder of the ultimate consequence of the layers of information, of attaching to them dogmatically, and of not, as we saw in the last chapter, letting them move. Towards the end of the series the voice that recurs throughout the film states emphatically that “*description is vandalism*” and how in fact, “*pictures too are mistakes*”. In engaging with Bredäng and delving down into its mediated images and associations, it becomes clear that the different depictions at once tell us everything and nothing. They give us a world of associations in all its human, animal and mineral aspects, and at the same time tell us nothing of the space that is being explored itself; the space where life is lived and where we place our feet as we walk through the snow-filled ground between the so-called Million Programme buildings in wintertime.

I now wish to return for a moment to Marks’ ideas of enfolding/unfolding. As mentioned in chapter one, in 2007, Marks collaborated in a project in the multimedia journal *Vectors*. Its aim was to visualise the processes of enfolding/unfolding and how these processes relate to the fields of experience, information, and image that I discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>127</sup> In the text accompanying the visualisations on the site, Marks describes photographs as “those rare moments where a ‘peak’ of experience/reality gets pulled up into an image”, bringing attention to precisely the infinity of experience that is *not* pulled up at any one time.<sup>128</sup> On the site, Marks analyses one of her own family photographs and describes the contents of experience that unfold to become image, and those which do not:

the expanse of sand (but not each grain, and not the texture of sand on your feet), the sky (but not the wind), my father, brother, niece and nephews (but not how they were feeling), watermelon (but not the taste of the watermelon).

What she brings attention to through these visualisations and descriptions is how images, and photographs in particular, do not give us experience/reality/infinity, and the mistake we make in thinking that they do.<sup>129</sup> At the same

127. Here, Marks uses the notions of *experience* or *reality* as interchangeable with the notion of *infinite* that I have discussed previously.

128. Marks, “Enfolding and Unfolding: An Aesthetics for the Information Age”.

129. In *Impure Vision: American Staged Art Photography of the 1970s* Moa Petersén writes about how the works that she analyses point to the insufficiency of photography to be some kind

time, as we see in Selander’s and certain other works throughout this book, the possibility remains of photographs pointing to the realm of experience/reality. One photograph of a young child toward the end of *The Ceremony* seems to contrast the images that surround it in terms of both its personal and sensuous resonances. The photograph, which shows a little girl holding a cat, is taken from an archive, but could just as easily be interpreted as a portrait of the artist herself. (fig. 19) The photograph evokes the physical sensation of the cat’s warm fur against the skin. The girl’s face is partly covered by a shadow and we can see little of her actual facial expression. Nevertheless, the manner in which she holds the cat and her stance, looking up at the camera, generate a feeling of excitement and trust toward the person depicting her. The photograph is highly affectively charged; an “image of love”, as Selander herself describes it.<sup>130</sup> The voice that follows this image moves from describing how “the signs ... are



19) Lina Selander, *The Ceremony* Film Still 2016. Courtesy of the artist

of “reality” as long as it remains in the realm of the optical and instrumental. She argues that reality is a full-body experience and that photography needs to find ways to reproduce experience of reality that includes more than just the visual. Moa Goysdotter, *Impure Vision: American Staged Photography of the 1970s* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2013).

130. From a conversation with the artist, January 2017.

questioned” and “the predator becomes its prey, to eat its fill”. The voice seems to describe the image world and how the associations through which we presume to know something risks devouring everything, including reality itself. It then continues to describe how

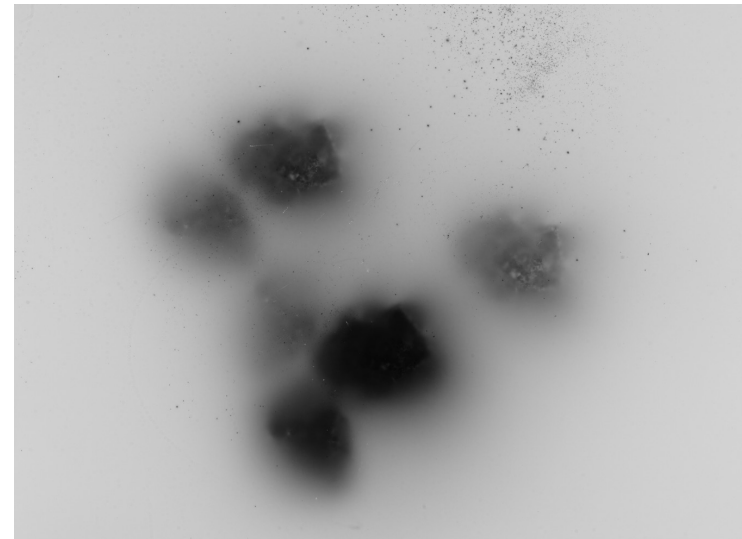
rhythm is originally the rhythm of feet... the long shared wanderings, the shifting terrain... rhythm is also the origin of writing... which is the trace of animals moving.

We come to sense how the origin of the symbol, like of the photograph itself, is not found in the nothingness of once and for all deconstructed space, but in the thickness of experience itself, from which it was never, and never could be, entirely disconnected. When we move through the layers and layers of images and associations, including the violence and barbarism that they can ultimately lead to, this is where we end up; in the affectivity of experience itself.

#### *Increasing the shadows*

At one point in *The Ceremony*, the voice tells us how “for a time light must become darkness”. Light as a phenomenon and concept returns in most if not all of Selander’s work. The title of this part of the chapter, *This Misery of Light*, is derived from an exhibition in which all the works discussed here by Selander were shown.<sup>131</sup> The title itself can be understood as a reference to light as the very basis and prerequisite for photography, but also to the utopian ideal of all-encompassing knowing. In her practice, light is explored in relation to visualising technologies and, in certain works, to photography in particular. In its most concrete materiality it is investigated in a series of photographic compositions that accompany her film *Lenin’s Lamp Glows in the Peasant’s Hut* (2011). In this series, Selander exposes photographic paper to uranium-containing rocks. (fig. 20) As Helena Holmberg describes in her text accompanying the piece, the black spots that result from the exposure are reminiscent of the after images that appear when you look into a bright light for a long time. As a concept, light returns as metaphor for the impulse to order, to structure, to universalise, or to unify. At the beginning of chapter one, I discussed Lippit’s idea of the all-en-

131. *This Misery of Light* was shown at Göteborgs Konsthall, Gothenburg, 8 October 2016–29 January 2017.



20) Lina Selander, *Lenin’s Lamp Glows in the Peasant’s Hut* 2011. Courtesy of the artist

compassing archival energies that he develops in *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)*. As I explained, building on Borge’s idea of the universal library, Lippit describes how the archive takes up all space and continues to expand, but nevertheless always leaves space as well. Or, almost always. The notion of the atomic bomb becomes a metaphor for the potentially destructive archival energies at their most extreme.<sup>132</sup> In relation to the atomic assaults on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Lippit describes how the heat and light of atoms threatened to “destroy the trace, to destroy even the shadows”.<sup>133</sup> Borrowing from the terminology of Junichiro Tanizaki, Lippit talks of the “mansion of literature” as that which is threatened by the intense light of a bomb, rather than the material destruction of its explosion. The task of the artist (in Lippit’s case the author) in the wake of such events becomes “to increase shadows, to introduce a visible darkness without light”.<sup>134</sup> The archive, then, in its destructive function but also in its destruction,

132. At the same time, the bomb can be seen to have done the complete opposite by levelling to the ground all differences, all kinds of structures. Lippit’s discussion gives a complex and at times contradictory image of the atomic light.

133. Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)*.

134. *Ibid.*, p. 25.



burns in a distinct manner peculiar to archives. It burns both internally and externally: engulfed by flames from the outside, passion and fever on the inside. A place at once interior and exposed, imaginary and material...<sup>135</sup>

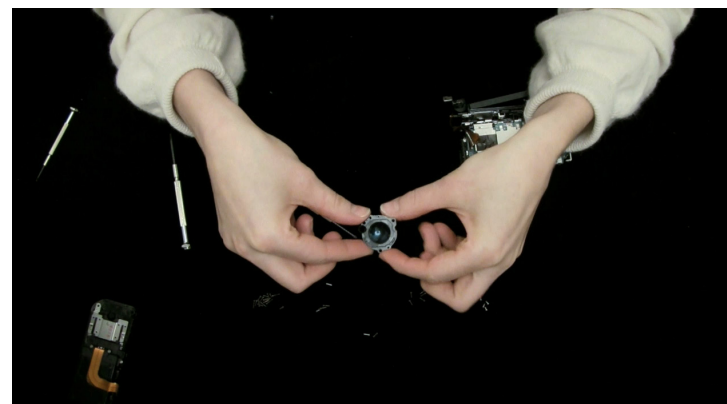
For light to become darkness, or to increase the shadows, becomes a way of counteracting the all-encompassing energies of the archive, and bringing in a *not knowing* or mystery in relation to the event or place that is being explored. Selander herself describes *The Ceremony* as “an act of resistance” and continues to describe “a tentative *breaking out of an order* where the maximum speed and movement’s hype synchronised time cannot be expressed other than in a stagnated and timeless flickering present”.<sup>136</sup> This tentative breaking out of a particular order, however, is what makes possible, as Selander also describes, “another rhythm [...]; an alien, unknown time, incompatible”. As previously described, this other rhythm can be understood as the rhythm of feet in long wanderings, a rhythm of another dimension which is always already here but which is normally not perceptible because of the pervasiveness of a particular order. What is left in the breaking out of a recognisable order is precisely a shadow, a darkness, an anarchive that is able to undo the totalising, unifying tendencies of the archive, and protect its secret.

Atomic energies, and the atomic bomb in particular, also return in several of Selander’s works and are often explored in connection with visualising technologies, and once again photography in particular. The film *To the Vision Machine* begins with a white screen and the sound of a whistle that is taken from *The Children of Hiroshima* (*Genbaku no ko*, 1952, by Japanese director Kaneto Shindo), a documentary film about the Peace Memorial Museum as it was constructed after the end of US occupation. In the work, clips from the film as well as the artist’s own recordings from the museum are shown together with long takes of Selander herself taking apart the camera with which the shots were taken. (fig. 21) In the accompanying text it is stated that the investigation is said to begin with the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, or more precisely: “the detonation of the atomic bomb as a photographic event”.<sup>137</sup> The text goes on to describe how a light was created from the first atomic bomb that lasted one-fifteenth of a millionth

135. Ibid., p. 9.

136. Oscar Mangione and Lina Selander, “This Misery of Light”, exhibition catalogue, Göteborgs Konsthall (2016), pp. 25–26.

137. Ibid., p. 24.



21) Lina Selander, *To the Vision Machine* Film Still 2013. Courtesy of the artist

of a second, and furthermore how this light “penetrated every building and shadows of objects and bodies were exposed and burned into the city’s surfaces”.<sup>138</sup> The perception of this light could only be achieved at the cost of one’s life. The disassembly of the camera becomes a literal and material deconstruction of the imaging technology that promises to get close to the event, but which only results in destruction. If, as I described in the previous chapter, photography can be understood through its contrasting functions of both participating in the “archiving energies” and at times in resisting and breaking with these energies, the camera here is approaching the former in its most extreme manifestation. As we were told in *The Ceremony*, “the predator becomes its prey, to eat its fill”. In trying to reach the core of the event, the archiving energies inevitably destroy themselves. In chapter six I return to the phenomenon of destruction and its relation to visualising technologies and photography in particular, and develop further the idea of the artist as being able to increase the shadows, or resurrect that which has gone missing in the wake of material and cultural disasters.

Above, I describe how many of the tendencies of modernity live on in contemporary societies. I talk about an attitude whose wider aim is to repeatedly structure and order the world as we know it, which can also be understood as a tendency to demystify, or objectify the world. Selander brings in photography as fundamentally connected to this tendency, as one of the most important tools through which this project of objectification is carried out. At the same time,

138. Ibid.

like many of the other artists whose work I discuss in this book, she uses these same technological tools to unfold starkly different perceptions of the world. In *The Ceremony*, the unfolding of layers of mediated images of the area of Bredäng leaves us not with the emptiness of deconstructed space, but rather with a sense of the thickness of experiencing the place itself. The image of the little girl, the wild animals, natural forces, as well as the sentences describing the origin of writing in the rhythm of feet all seem to point to material and embodied experience. Furthermore, the exploration of Soviet ideology and nuclear disaster are revealed as intrinsically connected to the materiality of photographic paper, and the documentation of the Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima is literally deconstructed through the technology that recorded it. Moreover, light comes across as both the foundation and precondition for photography but also in the form of the cataclysmic power of the atom bomb.

#### Unfolding Utopia

In the remainder of this chapter, I begin to move away from the notion of the archive, but stay briefly with the possibility of photographic works unfolding utopian notions of modernity. In one of his photography series, *Folkhem* (2001–3), Swedish photographer/artist Mats Eriksson takes on the remnants of a utopian vision connected to modernisation projects in Sweden of the last century. In chapter one I describe how, in 1922, Sweden became the first country in the world to open a State Institute for Racial Biology. The ideals behind the Institute – that of intentionally engineering a homogenous national body through scientific research and social projects – found some of their most destructive expression in projects whose further aim was to eliminate from the official history of Sweden the Sami people, and other elements of the population that did not fit into the ideal. At the same time, a belief in the scientific or social engineering of society profoundly influenced the Swedish welfare state that began to be developed in the 1930s and which perhaps saw its final expression in the Million Programme mentioned above. Eriksson's documentation of empty public buildings can be seen as an examination of the complexity of the modern project as it was carried out in Sweden during this period. The photographs show disused hospital and office spaces, bringing attention in particular to the materials (and materiality) of the spaces; the texture and shades of the fitted

carpets of what used to be the telecom building in Malmö, the linoleum floor, dark brown-red door, white walls and blue moulding of the office spaces of the former Social Democratic newspaper *Arbetet*, and the red linoleum floor and grey and white wallpaper of a windowless room in what used to be a hospital. (fig. 22) Some of these spaces have been left abandoned whereas others have

22) Mats Eriksson, *Closed Room* from *Winning a Battle, losing the War* 2002–3. Courtesy of the artist



been converted into student housing or used to accommodate new businesses. The focus of the series, however, is on the emptiness of the spaces and the perception of them as remnants of a project that has been left behind. As in many of the series in the following chapters, Eriksson's images are taken with a large format camera and presented in large scale, bringing particular attention to the minute details, the texture, light and hues of these spaces. I have already mentioned the nostalgia that can be found in relation to archival photographs of the early Republican era in Turkey. It is possible to detect something similar in Eriksson's series of modernist spaces in Sweden. Yet these images express a more ambiguous kind of nostalgia, which is perhaps more akin to melancholy. As is described in a catalogue text accompanying the exhibition, any nostalgia in the photographs is tempered by the often-oppressive atmosphere of many of the spaces.<sup>139</sup> As the text goes on to describe, any sense of loss evoked by the photographs is at the same time offset by knowledge of the "authoritarian excesses" that any utopian vision can lead to. In relation to Selander's work, I talk about such authoritarian excesses in terms of investing too much in one's belief in a particular world order, and the violence that risks being the result of these too-firm beliefs. Eriksson's series seems to contain at once the ideals of order, harmony and equality as implemented in the material structures that were meant to carry these principles, and the oppressiveness that inevitably accompanied the ideals in terms of those sections and members of society that did not fit into the ideals.

Eriksson's exploration of the ideals of modernism, however, does not remain only with these abandoned spaces in southern Sweden. The series has been exhibited together with others that direct the gaze to modernist architecture in different parts of the world, whose associations and materiality have been transformed through years of daily use.<sup>140</sup> One series, *Indian Grammar* (2004–6), which I here only mention very briefly, documents the capital of the Indian state of Punjab, Chandigarh, which was built after Indian independence in 1947. The master plan of the city was prepared by architect Le Corbusier, one of the foremost figures of modernist architecture and city planning. The town structure and much of its architecture came about at a time when India was in

139. Finbar Krook Rosato, "Winning a Battle, Losing the War", exhibition folder, Kristianstad Center for Contemporary Art (2009).

140. The series were shown together under the title *Winning a battle, losing the war* at Kristianstads Konsthall (2009).

the process of renewing itself after centuries of colonial rule. In part as Turkey above, there was a search for pre-existing systems and strategies that could be adopted and implemented in order to speed up the modernization process. The series documents the office spaces of the Chandigarh College of Architecture and, as in the series above, brings out how ideals of modernity are implemented in the material structure, but also how time and use of the spaces reveal aspects in contrast with these ideals. Another series documents the area of New Gurna, Egypt, in which modernist ideals can be seen have conspired to produce a failed project. Directing the gaze to these spaces once again brings forth modernity as a global condition that takes root, at times in contrasting ways, in various cultural locations around the world. The series brings together different kinds of architecture, revealing the details of their materiality and their lived presence, as well as an overview of their structures and relations. If architecture is, as is suggested in the text accompanying Eriksson's images, "the most immediately visual reminder of our political histories", then the photographs are what allow us to experience these viscerally in terms of their particular material expression.<sup>141</sup> In chapter six, I go deeper into a discussion of how large format technology in particular is able to bring a different perception and understanding of the materiality of certain politically and affectively charged spaces.

## Conclusion

This chapter has looked closely at works by Gülsün Karamustafa and Lina Selander which, in different ways, unfold new understandings from the archive. More specifically, I explored how both artists unfold aspects of history and attitudes that are connected to utopian notions of modernity. In relation to Karamustafa's work, I discussed how her use of the archive makes visible and apparent aspects of the more drastic modernisation projects during the early days of the Turkish Republic. In parts of her work, she uses archival material that concerns events that speak of both the ideals of modernity and a modernising process that became increasingly violent. In relation to the piece *Memory of a Square*, I paid attention to how these events can be found both in the embodied memory of everyday life and in the common narratives through which history

141. Rosato, "Winning a Battle, Losing the War".

is told. Furthermore, I brought attention to how the archival material unfolds a sense of the otherwise often overlooked globally interwoven character of the history of modernity. In relation to Selander's work, my analysis focused on the use of the archival material to unfold histories of modernity from a more abstract position. Here, the discussion focused on the possibility of archival engagements of unfolding perceptions of a particular place, of events in history, of people, or of the world in general, that do not aim to map out or control what is perceived. Rather, the possibility appears for counteracting the all-encompassing energies of the archive, and for bringing in a *not knowing* or mystery in relation to the event or place that is being explored. Finally, I began to move away from the archive and considered works by Mats Eriksson. I described how his work directs the attention to particular sites in which the material space itself gives sense to aspects of both the more idealist and more sinister aspects of modernisation processes in Sweden and elsewhere across the globe. In the chapter to follow, I leave the archive behind and begin to look more closely at recent works by photographers and artists that reveal aspects of migration and belonging that I argue would remain unseen (and unfelt) without the engagements of these practitioners. I also make use of examples from outside the art world to look at how particular everyday uses of photography participate in making and breaking different senses of belonging.

## *Part 2*

# Migration and Movement



## The Photograph in Migratory Aesthetics

*In which I discuss the notion of sightless vision in relation to surveillance technologies and consider the usefulness of the term migratory aesthetics. In the chapter, I also look at the possibility of photographic works acting as little resistances in relation to particular political situations. In relation to these notions, I explore how works by Tina Enghoff, Bradley Secker, Carlos Zaya, Coşkun Aral and Banu Cennetoğlu reveal migration and diaspora as embodied and lived processes within singular situations.*

### Technologies of Surveillance

In chapter one I enlisted the help of Alan Sekula's history of the photographic archive to briefly consider how underlying thought patterns of archival tendencies live on today in the operations of the national security state as well as in contemporary surveillance society. More specifically, Sekula describes two systems of documenting the criminal body that were developed in the 1880s, which aimed to connect the evidentiary promise of photography with a more abstract statistical method. Firstly, Alphonse Bertillon's invention, involving standardised descriptions of portraits that were placed within a larger searchable filing system, is recognised by Sekula as the first effective modern system of criminal identification. Secondly, the founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, invented a method of composite portraiture in his strive to "construct a purely optical

apparition of the criminal type".<sup>142</sup> Once again succumbing to the promise of photographic technology's ability to lay bare the optical essence of something, in this case the biologically determined criminal type, Galton's invention involved nothing less than "the photographic impression of an abstract, statistically defined, and empirically non-existent criminal face".<sup>143</sup> It is not difficult to recognise how the thinking behind these inventions survives in the twenty-first century in the mass surveillance carried out by both governmental organisations and corporations, as well as in some of the biotechnologies that are used in these activities.<sup>144</sup>

In the Introduction, I brought up Imre Szeman and Maria Whiteman's reflections on how photography can be seen as an essential visual component within a political situation, which can already be characterised in terms of extreme visibility. This concept, I argued – and will continue to posit throughout the book – constitutes the backdrop against which the particular discussions and analyses are carried out. In this chapter, this backdrop can be understood as the extensive use of different kinds of visualisation technologies in the processes of migration, particularly technologies of surveillance. Within this context the discussion will hone in on a number of photographic works that engage themselves with the subject in two different ways: by revealing the negotiations involved within these systems of control, and by unfolding migration and diasporas as embodied and lived processes within singular situations. As I have already suggested, in much photographic theory as it developed throughout the twentieth century, the objects of scrutiny have been the larger narratives, the theoretical models, or modalities. It is through these that attempts have been made to explain photography's social and political function and its relation to

142. Sekula, "The Body and the Archive", p. 19.

143. Ibid.

144. Sekula uses the term "neo-eugenicist" to describe some of these technologies. He also makes the jump in his discussion from "the criminal face" to that of the migrant. The unquestioned connection between being a criminal and being a migrant is also evident in the naming of undocumented migrants as illegal immigrants. In September 2010, Race Forward, a Centre for Racial Justice Innovation launched a campaign called Drop the I-Word, wanting to eliminate the word illegal in relation to migrants. Nevertheless, illegal migrant is still very common in political and media debates. See: <<https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/drop-i-word-campaign>>, accessed 1 June 2016.

forces of power. While these larger narratives remain as the backdrop – and occasional contrast – to my analysis, the aim here is to pay attention to the particular situated instances through which specific photographic works and projects are made and experienced. In order to do this, however, I firstly turn to some of the particularities of contemporary surveillance mechanisms within the European context.

Following the signing of the Schengen agreement in 1985 and, more specifically, its further implementation in 1995, the focus of European migration control has shifted from the internal borders within Europe to the external borders of what critics have come to call Fortress Europe.<sup>145</sup> The aim of the Schengen agreement was expressly to guarantee the free movement of people, goods, capital and services across the European states. The increased control of external borders became the consequence. In 2015, however, drastically increased numbers of people migrating to Europe were seen as a threat to many of the countries included in the agreement, to the extent that several countries took it upon themselves to reintroduce passport controls at national borders. As I discuss further below, one of those countries was Sweden. Internal issues notwithstanding, since the Schengen agreement was signed and the movement within the Schengen area increased, the EU has supported member countries with resources to strengthen the region's external borders. At least until the increased migration of 2015, the criticism against these enforced borders was growing stronger. This criticism was in part levelled at the way migrating people are treated at the borders, but in particular related to the risks that people face as they are forced to find alternative ways, often risking their lives, of crossing the borders of Europe. The term *irregular migrant* is often used when talking about migrants that can be seen to move “outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries.”<sup>146</sup> Each year thousands of irregular migrants die while trying to cross Europe's enforced borders.<sup>147</sup>

145. For example by Amnesty International, “The Human Cost of Fortress Europe”, <[http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Reports/EUR\\_050012014\\_Fortress\\_Europe\\_complete\\_web\\_EN.pdf](http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Reports/EUR_050012014_Fortress_Europe_complete_web_EN.pdf)>, accessed 15 October 2015.

146. International Organisation for Migration, “Key Migration Terms”, <<https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>>, accessed 1 June 2016.

147. See Amnesty International, “The Human Cost of Fortress Europe”.



23) Frontex situation centre, © Frontex

In 2005, the European Union established Frontex as an agency that would manage the European sea, land and air borders. The mission of the agency is to “reinforce and streamline cooperation between national border authorities” in order to strengthen the external borders of the EU.<sup>148</sup> Within the agency, Eurosur is the information-exchange network that Frontex uses to manage Europe's external borders. Eurosur gathers information collected by member states through various surveillance tools such as satellite images, ship reporting systems and surveillance planes. This information is then gathered into two “pictures”: the “European Situational Picture” and the “common pre-frontier intelligence picture”. (fig. 23) The former focuses on the external borders themselves. The latter concentrates on the areas beyond Schengen that are thought to be of significance to the surveillance of irregular migrants and the measures necessary to prevent them from crossing the border. Based on these pictures, Eurosur divides the border areas into sections marked by the risk level – low, medium, or high – of illegal border crossings, which in turn serves as the basis of security interventions in these areas. The result is at once a photographic image and a mapped space of an area that can be monitored for any irregular activity and, in turn, protected from intrusion. The further aim of Eurosur is, according to Frontex, “to support Member States by increasing their situational awareness

148. “About Frontex: Mission and Tasks”, <<http://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/mission-and-tasks/>>, accessed 11 September 2015.

and reaction capability in combating cross-border crime, tackling irregular migration and preventing loss of migrant lives at sea.”<sup>149</sup> As photography theorist Louise Wolthers brings out in her discussion on photography and what she calls “surveillance art”, however, the more likely consequence of intensified border controls and the surveillance of migrants is to force them further underground, which in turn increases their dependency on (often criminal) intermediaries. As Wolthers describes, this makes “human smuggling even more of a ‘growth industry’ than it already is.”<sup>150</sup>

In “Mapped Bodies” visual culture theorists Max Liljefors and Lila Lee-Morrison discuss the monitoring of the human body through a number of biometric technologies.<sup>151</sup> As Frontex was implemented because of a perceived need for a more coherent approach to the management of European external borders, a biometric database of asylum seekers’ fingerprint records, EURODAC, was implemented in the year 2000 to harmonise information within biometric systems under development. In the following decade, several more European biometric databases were implemented, including the latest biometric systems of fingerprint recognition, iris scanning and facial scans. The aim of using these visualisation technologies can be understood as achieving an all-encompassing visibility, which is thought to provide increasing security and control against the threat of intrusion. Similarly, the assumption behind the development and implementation of biometric technologies is that increased visibility of the body, in particular that of the irregular migrant, as a biophysical, measurable object will lead to more power for the state, and inter-state organisations, to control migrants and the threat that they are thought to pose to society. Nevertheless, drawing on the work of philosopher Vilém Flusser and cultural theorist Paul Virilio, Liljefors and Lee-Morrison discuss how biometric technologies “for all their visualizing power produce ultimately a form of blindness, or ‘sightless vi-

sion”.<sup>152</sup> The argument is that while biometric technologies construct a body of scientific knowledge, measurable and identifiable through the technologies available, the opaqueness of this process to human observers at the same time negates this same body as a phenomenological subject. As Liljefors and Lee-Morrison describe, this can be understood as “an inability to take account of the ‘first-person perspective’ of the other’s subjectivity.”<sup>153</sup> Virilio expands on the ethical dimension of what he calls the automation of perception, in which that which is perceived is interpreted by computers and decoded virtually through digitally created data streams. As Virilio puts it, “the production of sightless vision is itself merely the reproduction of an intense blindness.”<sup>154</sup> The most extreme and literal example of this sightless vision can be seen in the mechanisms mentioned above through which migrants are forced underground and into the hands of criminal intermediaries, risking their lives in the process.

## Migrant Documents

In contrast to the circumstances described above, I look at a number of works that I argue reveal the situated, affective and embodied aspects of migration and diaspora on the borders of Europe. In the project *Migrant Documents*, Danish artist Tina Enghoff investigates the negotiations involved in living as an undocumented migrant in Copenhagen in 2012. In the project, which is presented as a book and as an exhibition, Enghoff presents her own photographs as well as images taken by a group of undocumented North African migrants who take shelter in a park in Copenhagen. The series taken by the migrants is called *The Unknown is Not a Memory*. Presenting them with a camera, she offers them the opportunity to photograph the Danish capital from their own viewpoint.<sup>155</sup> Each

149. “Euroscur”, <<http://frontex.europa.eu/intelligence/euroscur/>>, accessed 11 September 2015.

150. Louise Wolthers, “Imagining Migration in Europe: Surveillance and Other Visibilities”, in Mika Elo and Marko Karo (ed.), *Photographic Powers – Helsinki Photomedia 2014* (Helsinki: Aalto University, 2014), p. 116. Wolthers, in turn, quotes Dennis Broeders and Godfried Engbersen, “The Fight against Illegal Migration Identification Policies and Immigrants’ Counterstrategies”, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50/12, 2007.

151. Max Liljefors and Lila Lee-Morrison, “Mapped Bodies Notes on the Use of Biometrics in Geopolitical Contexts”, *Socioaesthetics Ambience – Imaginary*, 19, 2015, pp. 53–72.

152. Ibid., p. 56.

153. Ibid., p. 64.

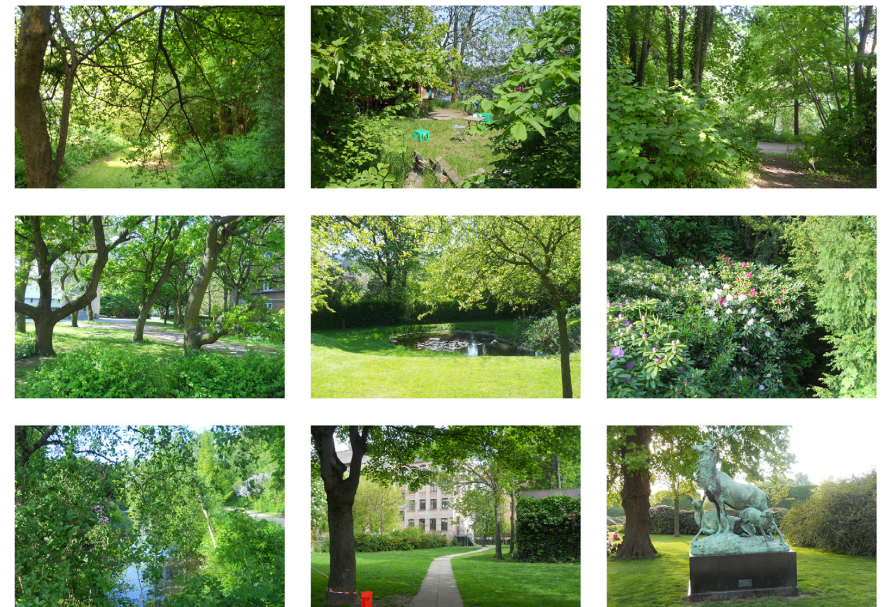
154. Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine* (Perspectives; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) p. 73.

155. Enghoff describes how she asked the migrants how much they would normally make in a day’s work of collecting cans and bottles, which is how they would normally spend their days. Adding to this amount by one or two hundred Danish crowns, she offered them a salary for spending three days observing the city with a camera. She also explains how she tried to invite them all to the forthcoming exhibition of the project, but how by that time



collaborator took a series of images showing what *they* wanted to document in the city where they live. The series was then printed as postcards and distributed freely around the city, including the age and country of origin of the person who took it on the back of each image. The book also includes excerpts from conversations with three migrants from Ghana. In much of her practice, Enghoff works with outreach projects where she uses the camera to collaborate with people in different kinds of marginalised positions in society. (In chapter four, I return to some of these projects in a discussion about photography's potential for action and change.) One series from *The Unknown is Not a Memory*, taken by a 26-year-old undocumented migrant from Ghana, features a number of activities carried out in urban Copenhagen. These scenes include a street sweeper in action, people buying tomatoes at a market, a sightseeing boat full of tourists passing by, a man changing tyres on his bike, a group of children in fluorescent vests ascending stairs from the underground, and, less expectedly, a swan seated in the middle of the pavement. In another series, by a 26-year-old undocumented migrant from Mali, the camera is directed entirely toward the green areas of different parks and gardens in Copenhagen, showing a statue, a muddy path or a building amongst lush greenery. (fig. 24) Other series are more varied, showing a mix of different scenes and close-ups from the city. Without knowing exactly what series relates to which conversation, it is nevertheless possible to make connections between some of the images and some of what comes up in the conversations included in the book. One photograph shows a dog sleeping on a pavement while the reflections in one of the conversations bring up how canines tend to be treated better than the migrants themselves. The person describes how, unlike themselves, the dogs are not shouted at or chased away, as well as how they are allowed to linger and even shit on the sidewalk with a human hand patiently cleaning up after them. Significantly, the conversations with the three Ghanaians have been given the title *Travel Notes* in the book and in the exhibition. As with the act of walking around photographing what ones sees in the city, the title is meant to bring up associations of tourism and travelling for leisure, thereby contrasting these acts and this identity with the more vulnerable and marginalised position of the (undocumented) migrant. The photographer of one of the series explains how the days of walking around with camera in

she could no longer get hold of any of them. From conversation with the artist, February 2016.



24) Tina Enghoff, *Migrant Documents, The Unknown is Not a Memory*, Postcards photograph, 2011. Courtesy of the artist



hand was the first time that he felt safe in Denmark, as if the camera presented him temporarily with a ticket to another identity and an entirely different power position than the migrant; the tourist.<sup>156</sup>

As Wolthers describes in a text also accompanying *Migrant Documents*, the project can be seen to engage with “the negotiations involved in being an undocumented migrant in an otherwise minutely registered Scandinavian nation.”<sup>157</sup> In

156. From a conversation with Enghoff, February 2016.

157. Louise Wolthers (text), Tina Enghoff (images), and Gösta Flemming (ed.), *Migrant Documents* (Journal, 2013).

one way, the undocumented migrants can be seen as living outside the network of control that guides the community that they live amongst, and which grants the members the privileges of belonging. At the same time, the migrants are the target of an intense surveillance system whose purpose is to register and document them, to mark them as outsiders and in turn force them to leave. In another part of the project called *Positions*, Enghoff focuses on Folkets park (People's park) in Copenhagen, where homeless migrants often sleep. She uses surveillance camera to record the area during three mornings and three evenings in January 2012. The grainy black and white images show the silhouettes of people walking in the snow-covered park, a dog trailing behind, someone sitting on a bench apparently looking out across the dark park in the night, and, in at least two of the images, someone in a sleeping bag on one of the benches. (fig. 25) The grainy surveillance images of the snowy park generate an eerie sensation, as if their purpose is to reveal some violent crime taking place in the area. The crime that they do reveal, however, is less overtly violent than what one might first expect. It is connected to the slow realisation that the blurry shapes on the park benches are people sleeping rough in the snow-clad park in January.

In the series *A Tree Cannot Block the Water*, also part of *Migrant Documents*, Enghoff directs her own camera to the personal belongings of a group of undoc-

25) Tina Enghoff, *Migrant Documents Positions, Frame-graps from the video*, 2012. Courtesy of the artist



umented migrants in the same park in 2011. The images are black and white and show bags, piles of clothing and shoes, sleeping bags and plastic bags placed amongst tree branches. (fig. 26) The belongings are put up in the trees in order not to be taken away and incinerated by the authorities. This series can be related to the discussion in chapter one concerning the possibility of certain works *looking back* at the archival processes whose purpose is to categorise and systematise (and in some cases eliminate certain parts of the system that are seen as not belonging). Rather than a registration or documentation that tries to pin down their identity of non-belonging within the system, the photographs record the material traces of the migrants' lives as they try to

navigate their non-belonging to the system. As such, they unfold precisely those affective and embodied experiences that are otherwise kept enfolded within the archive. *Disorder*, the title of another series, avoids any kind of identification altogether. Here, the physical traces of the bodies whose existence are found beyond the network of control are brought to perception with even greater intensity. In the series, Enghoff documents test tubes with blood samples from the Health Clinic for Undocumented Migrants.<sup>158</sup> This centre is the one place in Copenhagen where undocumented migrants can turn for medical help. It



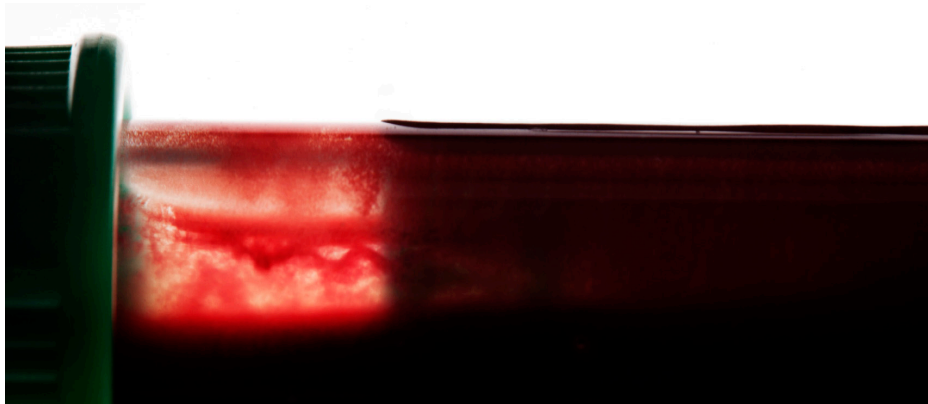
26) Tina Enghoff, *Migrant Documents, A Tree Cannot Block the Water*, 2011. Courtesy of the artist

158. Run by the Danish Red Cross in collaboration with the Danish Refugee Council and the Danish Medical Association.



has been the subject of intense political debate in Denmark, with some parties arguing that the information that they contain should be used to identify and, in turn, deport the undocumented migrants. The blood samples in the photographs, however, contain no information about the identity of the individuals who visited the centre. What they do reveal is an intensely visceral perception of the most physical aspect of these individuals' humanity, namely the red to black hues of the blood samples, the shapes and patterns created by air bubbles, the thinness or thickness of the blood at different stages of coagulation. (fig. 27) Finally, in the series *And Our Beds are Cedar Green*, Enghoff records the blankets and ground pads at the Danchurchsocial's night café in 2012, which is one of the few shelters in Copenhagen where undocumented migrants can spend the night. Some of the grey ground pads and pink and green sheets are carefully rolled up while others seem hastily stuffed onto the shelves. Together they form an uneven pattern of lines, shapes and hues that bring to mind the hands that take, unfold and cover themselves with these blankets at night and put them back in the morning. (fig. 28) In the images, the white shelves are abstracted from their background and placed against a white backdrop, bringing further attention to the colours and shapes of the material that fills the shelves.

27) Tina Enghoff, *Migrant Documents, Disorder, Blood tests from 26 undocumented migrants*, 2011. Courtesy of the artist



deeper into a discussion around how a different view of materiality in relation to the question of belonging is able to emerge through particular photographs. I suggest a possibility of perceiving materiality beyond language and beyond the conceptual divisions between man and nature or culture and matter. The works to be discussed in chapter five include little or no words or conceptual framework and are often rooted in personal experience. Enghoff's practice, in contrast, is deeply grounded within a particular political context. The focus is on the group of individuals that she works with and the specific political situation that they navigate. As such, and has already been mentioned, the series can be understood as an engagement with the negotiations involved within this situation. At the same time, however, what emerges from the photographs themselves is the extent to which these negotiations are always and inevitably grounded in materiality; a materiality which, as I will explore further, is not to be perceived as separate from the political situation, but intimately and intrinsically connected to it.



I now turn briefly to an entirely different series, *Syrian Nakba* (2014) by Istanbul-based photojournalist Bradley Secker, which has been published in, amongst other places, the Swedish magazine *Re:public*.<sup>159</sup> For this project, Secker has photographed the hands of Syrians in Turkey, holding the keys to the

28) Tina Enghoff, *Migrant Documents And Our Beds are Cedar Green, 22 days in the shelter*, 2011. Courtesy of the artist

159. In *Re:public* 37, Fall 2015, pp. 42–49.

homes that they have been forced to leave behind. The text accompanying the images in the magazine describes the everyday, often habitual act of throwing a final glance over one's shoulder before putting the key in the door and then customarily placing it in one's pocket. This routine act acquires an altogether different kind of significance in relation to the keys and hands portrayed in the series. The images are very detailed, and some are much enlarged, one covering a double-page spread in the magazine. The scale brings out the details and shadows of the hands, the keys and, in some instances, a key holder, a watch or part of a shirt sleeve. The hands are somewhat dimly lit and photographed against a black background, thereby excluding anything that might deflect attention from these details. Underneath each image are details about the person whose hand is photographed. This includes his or her name, age and home town as well as how long ago they had to leave and what "home" means to them. Ola, 28, from Latakia, who holds her keys with an open hand and whose nails are long and painted mahogany red, describes her relation to home as "paradise", while Mo-hanad, 43, from Damascus, whose wrist and fingers are rotund and who holds his keys in a gentle clasp, describes his home as "just a place in a nice space". (fig 29) Several others describe their home as "my life", or "all my life" or "everything". Wael, 40, from Idlib, whose clenched fist and naked wrist fill up a double page spread, and whose keys are mostly hidden in his closed hand, describes home as "memories of life". (fig. 30) The subjects of this series are not "migrants", in the generalising and reductive sense that the term is often used in media, as if being a migrant is a permanent identity rather than a temporary and unwanted condition. What resonates in the images is the physicality of people's hands and the materiality of the keys, and in particular the differences in the details; the postures of the hands, the intensity of their grip, their skin tones and hair, as well as the different colours and hues of the keys and key-holders. These aspects together with the facts given about the owners, especially their description of what the home that they left means to them, gives the series the potential to unfold an understanding that resonates on a different level from those countless images that circulate in different kind of media. This is an understanding that does not place the people depicted in a position of being the eternal migrant, but which rather resounds in the embodied familiarity of holding the keys of one's home in one's hand; a sensation raised to an entirely different level because of the accompanying words and the knowledge they bring to the photographs.<sup>160</sup>

160. In some of the examples that I address, such as this one by Secker as well as Zaya's below,



Enghoff's and Secker's work differ from one another in terms of the political situations with which they engage and in terms of their approach. What stands out photographically, however, is that Secker's and many of Enghoff's works are close-ups, bringing to attention the thickness of material and embodied experience, rather than the distant situational images of Eurosur. Moreover, by making perceptible the complexity of situated and affective negotiations involved in being a migrant, both can be understood as bringing back sight to the "sightlessness" of the technologies of surveillance discussed above. If the aim of

29–30) Bradley Secker, *Syrian Nakba* 2014. Courtesy of the artist

words are presented as part of the works themselves and play a crucial role in how the assemblage is experienced. In other pieces, catalogue text or other verbal information are important parts of shaping their affective and embodied experience. In chapter six, I develop further the relationship between verbal information and photography, and talk about how conceptual and/or verbal understanding is always and inevitably intertwined, in particular in relation to works within the trend of *late photography*.

the visualisation technologies of Eurosur has to do with creating distance, an overview from which it is thought that security can be increased and the apparent threat of intrusion can be controlled, these works reveal the individuals that they aim to control as phenomenological subjects. They bring out at least a possibility of affectively engaging with the other's subjectivity as a first-person perspective, and of sensing the extent to which the situations engaged with are grounded in particular, situated, embodied and affective circumstances.

### Little Resistances

In the following section, I move from a particular situation involving Sweden's anti-immigrant party to a discussion of how photographs are able to function as "little resistances" to a particular political structure. The discussion is connected to the exploration in chapter one of the complex ways in which photographs are able to act as agents of change. Continuing to look at the potential of photographs in bringing about inter-subjective meetings, I analyse two projects in which photographs are exhibited in public space for the purpose of engaging viewers that may not otherwise come across such images. In 2015, the "migration crisis" became a concept that circulated widely in social and traditional media. While migration to Europe has been increasing for several decades, the war in Syria as well as the unstable situation in Afghanistan led to people fleeing to Europe in unprecedented numbers. The situation was described as the worst refugee crisis since the end of World War II.<sup>161</sup> When this emergency was discussed in Europe, however, it was usually talked about in terms of the strain on the economies of the EU countries, rather than as a humanitarian crisis affecting people from war-torn areas. Initially, Sweden along with Germany emerged as one of the most humanitarian European countries in terms of welcoming refugees. However, in November 2015 the drastic decision was made to introduce ID-controls on all trains and buses entering Sweden. This initiative effectively closed the Öresund bridge between Denmark and Sweden for refugees. At a press conference on 9 October, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven talked

161. By, for example, Lucy Westcott, "Refugee and Migrant Numbers Top One Million in Europe, Says Iom", *Newsweek*, 22 December 2015, <<http://europe.newsweek.com/refugee-and-migrants-numbers-europe-top-one-million-iom-408074>>, accessed 3 January 2016.

of Sweden "facing a crisis situation", in terms of being unable – both practically and financially – to handle the increasing amount of people seeking asylum in Sweden.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, the often heated debates about Sweden's position in social as well as traditional media often followed the same trajectory as the equally impassioned discussions concerning people from poorer EU countries, such as Romania and Bulgaria, who came to Sweden, and elsewhere in Europe, to make a living from begging. Before 2015, street beggars had been an unfamiliar sight in many parts of Sweden. Media reaction tended to present the situation as a problem; either a humanitarian one, as a symptom of deep poverty needing to be dealt with, or, just as often, as a problematic sight for onlookers. As with the asylum seekers above, the practical "solution" from the government and municipalities was to go against any humanitarian tradition that may have previously existed. Drastic measures of tearing down temporary living arrangements without providing alternative housing options were implemented in many places.<sup>163</sup> In August 2015, the Sweden Democrats, a party with a strong anti-immigration agenda that was elected into parliament in 2010, ran an advertising campaign on the Stockholm underground apologising to tourists for the number of street beggars and claiming that the government was failing in its duty to tackle this issue. Arguably, the campaign was aimed primarily at the Swedish public, rather than tourists. It attempted to portray the beggars as part of "international gangs" that "profit from people's desperation" and to make the main parties in government look as though they were not doing their job in dealing with this "crime". This was motivated by a desire to increase support for the Sweden Democrats and their anti-immigration agenda.

In 2015, the sight of these public transport advertisements prompted Swedish photographer Carlos Zaya to make the photography series *Starkare Röst*

162. Löfven cited in Björn Dickson and Jani Pirttälä, "Regeringen öppnar för tältläger", *Svenska Dagbladet*, 10 October 2015, p. 10.

163. As Ola Andersson has opined in relation to a series of evictions in Malmö in November 2015, this goes against the European Convention on Human Rights if such actions result in homelessness for the people affected. Ola Andersson, "Avhysningen bryter mot medborgarligen rättigheter", *Dagens Nyheter*, 6 November 2015, p. 6. This position was also shared by Civil Rights Defenders, "Stoppa avhysningen från boplatser på Sorgenfri", <<http://www.civilrightsdefenders.org/sv/news/svenska-stoppa-avhysningen-fran-sorgenfri/>>, accessed 15 November 2015.

(Stronger Voice) (2014). It shows the face and stories of ten immigrants from Romania who came to Sweden in the hope of making money through begging or busking. The photographer wanted to exhibit these images not in galleries but on the street, as a response to the adverts that were put up by the Sweden Democrats. By presenting larger than life close-ups of the subjects' faces together with excerpts from their stories, the intention was to give a voice to, and make visible as human beings, the people whose existence in public spaces is often fervently debated in media, but whose own perspectives remain mostly hidden.<sup>164</sup>

In *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture: Conflict, Resistance, and Agency* cultural theorists Mieke Bal and Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro write about what they call "little resistances" in relation to "the limited but potentially powerful political impact of art".<sup>165</sup> As is further explored below, Bal and Hernández-Navarro focus on migratory culture particularly in terms of the "sensate traces of the movement of migration" that they describe as the main phenomena of contemporary culture.<sup>166</sup> With this perspective on the migratory in mind, the authors explain how, "in the social domain, art can enact small-scale resistances against the status quo".<sup>167</sup> When discussing the political in this way, they turn to political theorist Chantal Mouffe who makes an important distinction between "the political" and "politics":

by "the political" I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by "politics" I mean the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political.<sup>168</sup>

In other words, while politics is understood in terms of the laws and regulations that frame social life, what Mouffe, and in turn Bal and Hernández-Navarro, refer to as "the political" can be understood as those social spaces that are able to contain tensions and conflicts of one kind or another. Conflict here is seen as something positive and desirable, as the possibility of testing and rework-

164. From a conversation with the artist, November 2015.

165. Mieke Bal and Miguel Á Hernández-Navarro (eds.), *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture: Conflict, Resistance, and Agency* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2011), p. 9.

166. Ibid., p. 10.

167. Ibid., p. 9.

168. Quoted in *ibid.*

ing different perceptions of the world, or *re-distributing the sensible*, were we to borrow the terminology of Jacques Rancière, as the authors sometimes do. Bal and Hernández-Navarro then go on to place the idea of art as "little resistances" with the potential of affecting the political in relation to a wider understanding of migratory culture. The latter is, for Bal and Hernández-Navarro, not to be understood so much as the culture of migrating peoples, but as a way of understanding "a state of the culture that we share".<sup>169</sup> Here, migratory is not seen as the exception to a state that is stable but, as we saw above, "the sensate traces of the movements of migration that characterize contemporary culture" as a whole.<sup>170</sup> Within this understanding of migration as a general state of contemporary culture, society itself can be seen as consisting of a constant productive tension, and the role of art becomes all the more significant in making visible the spaces within which this tension is to be acted out. As is explored further below, migration becomes not a topic itself but an aesthetic.

Furthermore, when talking of "the political" in terms of an aesthetic, this inevitably brings it into the realm of materiality and proximity. Hence, the artworks that are recognised as making visible the spaces of tension are not understood in terms of representation, but as presentations of potentialities that act on physical bodies within localised spaces. Similarly, Zaya talks of his series in terms of not trying to represent the individuals portrayed to achieve a particular aim.<sup>171</sup> Such aims could involve either trying to generate sympathy, as is often the case with images by, for example, non-governmental organisations or many traditional media that in one way or another tend to portray migrants as victims, or within anti-immigrant propaganda who benefit from depicting both beggars and migrants as perpetrators or just simply greedy. With diametrically different objectives, in both cases the result is a representation of a group of people for an external purpose, where the depictions themselves, whether in words or images, become means to an end. This can be related to the notion of extreme visibility mentioned earlier, in that any photographic engagement always and necessarily has to be understood against a background of layers and layers of already existing depictions relating to the subject. In contrast to the countless images that function as the means to an end, the objective of *Starkare Röst* is to

169. Ibid., p. 10.

170. Ibid.

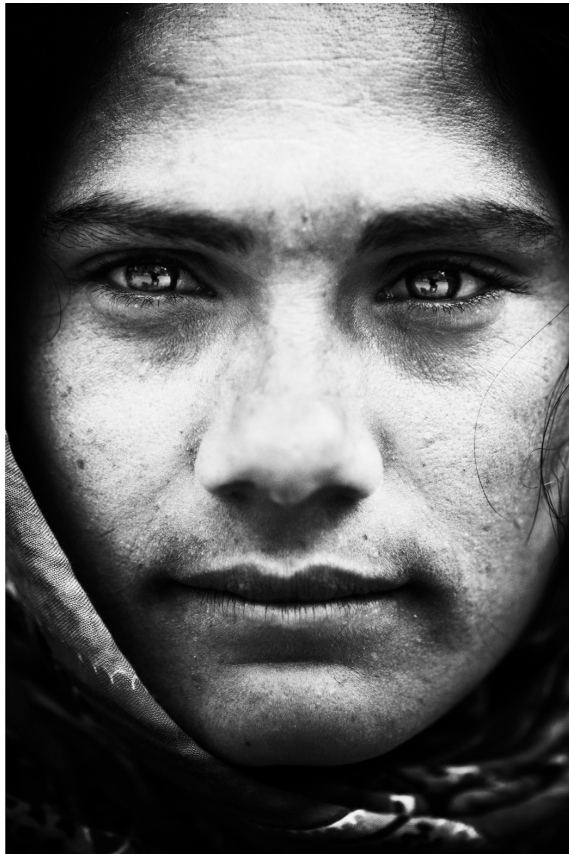
171. In conversation with the artists, October 2015.



provide a space for involvement without the attachment to an outcome other than the encounter between the perceiver and the works.

The printed images of *Starkare Röst* are 2 x 1.40 metres in size and are filled with the face of the subject. The corners of the image are made dark in order to further emphasize the face. The photographs are black and white with a low depth of field, which particularly brings out the eyes of the subjects. All the subjects look straight into the camera lens. In several of the images there is a reflection in the eyes that gives the impression of depth, as if a whole other pic-

ture with a story of its own is being portrayed within the irises. One of the images shows a young woman whose gaze is resolutely fixed on the camera. (fig. 31) This sort of stare can be found in several of the other subjects as well. Apart from her face only a small part of what appears to be a headscarf is seen along one of her cheeks, as well as a few strands of hair on the other side of her face. The short depth of field brings only the centre of her eyes and her lips into focus. Inside the pupils the focus is sharp enough to show what we understand to be the silhouette of the photographer against a background that appears to extend far into the eyes. Another image shows an older woman with deep wrinkles on her face that become intensely visible through the sharp contrast of the photographs. Her two front teeth appear to be broken, whilst others are missing from her pained grin. The expression on her face is strained, as if racked by enduring struggle. Nevertheless, her gaze is



resolute and the centre of her eyes reveal a clarity, which appears to be in direct contrast with the expression on her face. Even as her eyes are partly shut because of her strained mien, the depth and clarity of what is seen in those pupils appear untouched by the hardship that her expression reveals.

In "Mapped Bodies", Liljefors and Lee-Morrison write about the part the human eye plays in biometric methods used in migration control and security politics, noting that the eye is "generally considered to be a vehicle for the expression of an interior self, as a 'window to the soul'".<sup>172</sup> They go on to add that, whilst this metaphor does not have any connection to what we know of how the eye functions biologically, it is nevertheless a "powerful phantasy (sic) that structures our understanding of our life together".<sup>173</sup> This interior self, however, is, according to Liljefors and Lee-Morrison, precisely what is blocked through the biometric technology of the eye scan, which considers the human eye only in terms of its measurable characteristics. The result, as mentioned, can be understood in terms of a kind of vision which paradoxically renders the eye blind. In Zaya's images, the apparent depth and sharpness of the eye creates the sense of an encounter between the perceiver and the image, an embodied meeting between two subjects rather than betwixt a viewer and a representation. The photographer explains how, being exhibited in a public space rather than a gallery, many people come across the images by chance.<sup>174</sup> Not being prepared for such an encounter, many of these individuals expressed a sense of being moved by them. However, having spent some time observing and talking to people as they encountered the images, Zaya also came across people apparently set on not being moved by the images, avoiding the engagement and expressing opinions such as "they are all the same" and "they all want the same thing". When the images were exhibited in a public space in Borås in November 2015, they were sabotaged after just a few days of being exhibited. Significantly, the sabotage consisted not just of random destruction, but of covering the eyes, and in some cases the mouth, with white spray paint. (fig. 32) The aim seemed to be to actively avoid engaging with the people depicted as subjects in their own right; as if the perpetrators wanted to block the very process that the images were aiming to put in motion, of "hearing" the voices of the people presented and of seeing them

172. Liljefors and Lee-Morrison, "Mapped Bodies", p. 63.

173. Ibid., p. 65.

174. From a conversation with the artist, November 2015.



32) *Vandalizing of Starkare röst, Borås, 2015, © Marie-Louise Weise*

as subjects. The result became an act of double blinding, both of the face of the subjects and, through that, of the perpetrators' own vision, in order not to have to see, thereby blocking any potential engagement and negating the possibility of some kind of subjective reciprocity. This can be seen as being similar to the way the application of machine vision affects the human eye.

As becomes apparent through this deliberate sabotage, engagement with others as subjects in their own right is precisely what threatens the perception of them as known objects. Philosopher Emmanuel Levinas brings in a concept of *the infinite*, a concept discussed in a slightly different variant in chapter one, when considering his understanding of what happens and what is at stake in

meeting another person. He describes his discussion in *Totality and Infinity* as "a defence of subjectivity", which he in turn explains as being founded in the idea of infinity.<sup>175</sup> The notion of infinity returns here in a slightly different guise than in the discussion in chapter one, but nevertheless contains the same fundamental potential, namely to point to that which is in excess of any concept. As Levinas describes, "infinity overflows the thought that thinks it".<sup>176</sup> Moreover, Levinas explains how infinity can be understood in contrast to having an opinion (of someone). While the latter involves the reduction of someone to a known thing, infinity is precisely what overflows this thought. As Levinas puts it, "[t]o think the infinite, the transcendent, the Stranger, is hence not to think an object".<sup>177</sup> What's more, Levinas finds a paradox in the relation between the concept of infinity and that of subjectivity. As he describes, "(s)ubjectivity realizes... the astonishing feat of containing more than is possible to contain".<sup>178</sup> Consequentially, coming face to face with another person is thus to potentially come face to face with infinity, as an understanding that has no destination and no external purpose. Moreover, Levinas writes about turning the other into a concept, into opinion, as a type of violence, a violence that is put to an end precisely through meeting the other person as a subject. Arguably, some photographic works, like Zaya's above, open up a potential engagement with the subjects as just that – subjects – and to the infinity that this concept can be seen to entail. The intense and even violent antagonism towards them by some perceivers only strengthens the idea of this possibility further.

I now move on to another photography series that deals with similar issues within the arena of public space. In the summer of 2015, Turkish photographer Coşkun Aral stayed in Landskrona in southern Sweden as photographer in residence for three months. During his residency he created a series of works called *Exodus*. This was exhibited on the walls of different buildings across the city for the period of a year between 2015 and 2016. The series depicts people from different parts of the world who at some point in their lives were forced to leave their country and come to settle in Landskrona. The people depicted came from

175. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity; an Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

176. Ibid., p. 25.

177. Ibid., p. 49.

178. Ibid., p. 27.



Poland, Ghana, the Balkans, and the Middle East. As with Zaya's images above, the series came about through a long process of the artist talking to people in the city about their previous existence, their decision to leave, and their lives in the new country. Aral relates how some people would not participate because of fears relating to the situations from which they once had to flee, whilst others were more eager to tell their stories and participate in the project.<sup>179</sup> As with Zaya, Aral describes a desire to hear the stories of some of the people who are the object of intense debates, but whose voices are rarely heard.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to the artistic photographic projects, including the residency in Landskrona, Aral has had a long history of working as a photojournalist in different war- and conflict-torn regions of the world. In each of the works in *Exodus*, a portrait is shot in front of a photograph from the photographer's own collection taken in the area from which the person comes. In most of the images, the background scene reflects the violence or conflict of the region in one way or another, such as a tank amongst the rubble of torn down buildings or a scene showing an apparent hiatus between armed combatants. One of the images shows a father with his two children on his lap. (fig. 33) The father is bearded with a black and white keffiyeh (a traditional Arab headdress) worn loosely on his head. He looks straight into the camera with what looks like a half-smile on his lips; a smile that is also reflected in his eyes. One of the children looks up at the father while the other tilts her head toward the camera, smiles and makes big eyes at the camera. All three look healthy and content with being

179. Aral explains how the conversations would at times result in no photograph being taken. Also, Zaya and Enghoff describe the process of preparing for and taking the photographs and reflect on the power relations involved in the position of being a photojournalist, a photographer, and/or an artist. As mentioned, Zaya describes listening to people's stories of ill-intentioned journalists and politicians who want to present them in a bad light. Enghoff talks about how she always begins a collaboration with the question of what do *you* want to do? She talks about how, as an artist, you always have an agenda when you initiate a project. At the same time, she describes how she will not do anything without the agreement of the people with whom she is working. All three describe the meeting involved as an ongoing conversation, of which they themselves can never be entirely in control. They describe how the meeting has to take time and as the photographer and/or artist you always have to be prepared to step back or change the idea or plan that you may have brought with you to the meeting. In the next chapter, I return to these reflections in a discussion around the complexity of photographic power relations.

180. From an artist presentation, Landskrona Foto Festival, August 2014.

photographed. Their appearance and demeanour stand in stark contrast to the scene behind, which shows a woman holding a baby, with an older child directly behind her. The latter appears to be running and the woman holds her head down and seems to be fully concentrated on making her way through the



33) Coşkun Aral,  
*Exodus, Outdoor*  
exhibition, 2015,  
© Erika Larsson

debris of an area in which some kind of violent event has apparently recently occurred. To the rear of the people we see two cars with broken windows, covered with rubble.

Closer inspection and an awareness of the way the project was conducted reveal the images to be full of information, striking contrasts and potential affective engagements with the subjects and scenery depicted. Unlike Zaya's images above, however, where the visual material is likely to arrest a passer-by through its sheer magnitude and intensity, and where quotes of the subjects' stories provide an immediate framing and context, Aral's smaller and wordless images are likely to be ignored by an unwitting bystander. The images are smaller and black and white, without the stark contrast of Zaya's pieces, and are spread out in different parts of the city, demanding an already engaged and persistent perceiver to take in the whole series as well as to find out more about the associated stories. Aral's images are printed on aluminium and mounted on walls around the city in order to give them durability. When this was done previously in Landskrona in connection with the residency, with a less politically loaded subject matter, all of the images were left untouched for the whole year that they were exhibited. Examining Aral's images just a week after their installation revealed, however, that at least one of the images had been damaged by scratches. Significantly, the scratches only cover the face of the person depicted. Once again, for the willing perceiver, the photographs hold the potential for an affective engagement with the subjects and situations depicted. This latent possibility, it would seem, can also be experienced as a threat to those actively resisting such an engagement and for whom such an affective engagement could threaten to undermine the categories on which their particular political standpoint depends.

In both Aral and Zaya's works, there is nothing evident in terms of what the images will ultimately lead to. As we have seen, the works presented prompted differing and sometimes opposing reactions. What they all make clear, however, is that there is at least the potential for an affective engagement, a possibility of these engagements acting as "little resistances" and of affecting the political in relation to a wider understanding of migratory culture. Furthermore, rather than dealing with questions of migration and belonging in the abstract, these concepts become incarnated through the works in particular positionalities and materialities. Bal, with specific regard to artworks dealing with the notions of migration and globalisation, explains that "since art making is a material practice,

there is no such thing as site-unspecific art".<sup>181</sup> Hence the shift in perspective that changes the *nowhere* of much of globalisation theory as well as much of post-colonial contemporary art theory to a *now-here*.<sup>182</sup> In one way or another, all the works discussed throughout this book can be understood in terms of driving abstract notions of belonging into particular material positions for the purpose of affective and effective engagement.

### Migratory Aesthetics

As we have seen, Bal coined the term "migratory aesthetics" to discuss sentient engagements through cultural productions that take the mobility of people as "the heart of what matters" in the contemporary globalised world.<sup>183</sup> Bal relates this concept to art critic Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of "relational aesthetics" as well as Jill Bennett's previously discussed idea of "empathic aesthetics". These are notions of an aesthetics that, true to its literal meaning, take into account affective engagement. This includes, necessarily, the sensing body in relation to cultural productions that are considered to be empty without this engagement. In terms that we recognise from the previous section, Bal brings out how these aesthetical modifications point to an ability of certain cultural engagements to do political work, or, as she describes in relation to her particular modification, are foremost useful in terms of their ability to help us understand "possibilities for art to be politically effective".<sup>184</sup> In a similar vein, cultural theorist Sam Durrant and artist Catherine M. Lord discuss how movement (or the constraint thereof) becomes the impetus or condition for aesthetic productions.<sup>185</sup> They write about the condition in which goods, labour and capital are becoming increasingly mobile through globalisation, and how movement for groups or individuals is either an expression of agency and of powerlessness when there

181. Mieke Bal, "Lost in Space, Lost in the Library", in Sam Durrant and Catherine M. Lord (eds.), *Essays in Migratory Aesthetics: Cultural Practices Between Migration and Art-making* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), p. 25.

182. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

183. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

184. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

185. Sam Durrant and Catherine M. Lord, *Essays in Migratory Aesthetics: Cultural Practices between Migration and Art-Making* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).



is either no choice but to move, or when travel is made impossible through external constraint. Furthermore, they open up the question of how aesthetic productions reflect and contest the unequal power relations ingrained in these endless interchanges. Echoing the argument of Mercer explored in chapter two, Durrant and Lord argue against the conservatism of constructing distinct national artistic traditions, and begin instead from the premise that artistic production is in itself inherently migratory. If cultures are in themselves innately in transition, and intensely so under the circumstances of contemporary modes of globalisation, migratory aesthetics becomes a way of registering the endless becomings of these ongoing transmutations.<sup>186</sup>

In the remainder of this chapter, I will look more closely at two projects by Turkish artist Banu Cennetoğlu that I argue in different ways register and make available through affective engagement the tensions and comings and goings of migration. As part of the piece *False Witness* (2003), Cennetoğlu photographically documents the physical spaces of a registration centre for asylum seekers in Ter Apel, the Netherlands. Together with a few select images from other sources, the photographs are presented as an exhibition as well as in a printed version. With no titles, the photographs themselves reveal little in terms of concrete information. They show close-ups of institutional buildings and their surroundings; an unmade bed in an otherwise sterile meeting room, people biding their

186. From a different theoretical perspective, in a project investigating increasing anti-immigration sentiments in Denmark, Michael Haldrup, Lasse Koefoed and Kirsten Simonsen make a similar argument for the need to direct the focus toward bodily and sensuous practices. Their work explores how “processes of othering” are “enacted in concrete bodily meetings in everyday life”. Drawing on Michael Billig’s idea of banal nationalism, Haldrup, Koefoed and Simonsen analyse how neo-nationalist attitudes quickly became commonplace within Danish society during the first years of the twenty-first century, and point out how such transformations frequently rest “on small, often unnoticed and ‘banal’ acts and articulations of everyday life”. These acts and articulations are not necessarily conscious, but, conversely, often emerge from visceral, affective and pre-discursive processes. In terms of changes in attitudes towards the “internal other” in twenty-first century Denmark, Haldrup, Koefoed and Simonsen describe recent changes in terms of often unnoticeable shifts in the repetitions that create and naturalise embodied understandings of people, causing a gradual slide in socially acceptable speech and suggestion. Michael Haldrup, Lasse Koefoed, and Kirsten Simonsen, “Practical Orientalism: Bodies, Everyday Life and the Construction of Otherness”, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 88/2, 2006, pp. 173–184.



34–35) Banu Cennetoğlu, *False Witness*, 2003. Courtesy of the artist



time in equally barren building spaces, together with a few apparently random views of people in more or less lifeless settings from other parts of the world. (fig. 34–35) Knowing nothing of the documented sites, these photographs may simply conjure up associations of bureaucratic dullness and material poverty,

together, perhaps, with a sense of randomness stemming from the seemingly arbitrary way in which the different scenes have been combined.

However, this set of images begins to take on different kinds of meanings once one knows the purpose and use of the documented spaces. Cennetoğlu herself explains how the structure of the asylum centre is designed so that the asylum seeker has to follow a certain path throughout the space, and how the colours used in the different parts of the building are used to symbolise the position of the asylum seeker at different stages of the process.<sup>187</sup> For example, s/he enters the space by walking through a blue door, which is intended to symbolise the “cold and the East”. The granting of temporary asylum initiates a longer process of obtaining a residence visa. The applicant then leaves the space through an orange hued area. Significantly, this symbolic colour scheme is not the interpretation of the artist but is instead explained to Cennetoğlu by the centre’s public relations manager. This cynical and, some might argue, farcical relationship between the centre’s physical structure and the process of seeking asylum invites a straightforward critique of the space. Cennetoğlu avoids this by opting instead to combine depictions of the centre with images from other places, including governmental kindergartens in Batumi and social housings in Quito, as well as the surroundings of Chamarande in France. As such, the series of photographs are to be understood not only as an engagement with this particular asylum space itself, but as enactments of the underlying patterns and surveillance technologies that manage people and their relation to space and movement on a wider, global scale.

Whenever exhibited, the photographs are shown along one side of three consecutive narrow corridors, as a spatial translation of the book, which is printed in three stripes, each of which represents one particular corridor. Being unable to confront all the images in one gaze, the viewer is made to physically enter and move through the entire space before taking in the series as a whole. The artist herself expresses an interest in the performative aspect of the presentations, in which new perspectives (literally and metaphorically) appear as the viewer confronts the work as a body traversing physical space.<sup>188</sup> Through working with the formal aspects of the contents of the images, as well as the surrounding

187. For a further elaboration see Antonia García Castro and Miriam Perier, “Art Has the Power of Its Undeclinability”: An Interview with Banu Cennetoğlu”, *Cultures & Conflicts* (online), 10 January 2006, <<http://conflits.revues.org/1865>>, accessed 10 January 2016.

188. From a conversation with the artist, April 2011.

environment, she creates a space to be entered into physically rather than contemplated at a distance. The impossibility of the viewer standing back to gain a totalising overview makes a space of interaction and participation possible, in which the physical body is as important as the analysing mind. A connection can be made to the mechanisms of surveillance technologies mentioned above, as a kind of resistance to over-viewing, mapping, categorising and systematising the processes that are being perceived.

What is presented is a physical space to be entered into. Inside, distances, particular hues, shades and textures, as well as the physical body, participate in an engagement that speaks of spaces of intercultural movements and interactions, but avoids any claim to make statements about, or represent, such a space. In the piece, the carefully calculated colour scheme is calculated to guide the passage of outsiders towards the promised position of insider. This plays on the same field, including such associations as the particular smoothness of a polypropylene chair, worn texture of an old bed cover, or the specific hunch of an extended wait. Describing a photographic experience in terms of texture (such as the certain type of smoothness of moulded plastic) is, as such, not a matter of translating a visual experience into a tactile one, but rather an expression of the inevitable synestheticity of affective experience. Also implicated here are the memories of other spaces that the participants bring to the encounter. Like emotions, recollections can be seen to function as, at once, pre-reflective, sensuous or affective intensities – as well as recognised, determined and “captured” sensation. Escaping any attempt to be arrested, caught, or pinned down through theory, it is possible to argue that it is only in the participatory that the pre-discursive is preserved. Rather than stating the facts, what is left for theory to do is bring attention to this participation.

In the piece, Cennetoğlu includes a short text made up of sentences that, in one way or another, include the word “measure”, taken from a corpus (a collection of samples of written language) and then reworked by the artists:

378858 mr badman uses false weights and measures cheats his debtors through a bogus bankruptcy.

110487 all have to show goodwill and find appropriate emergency measures.

331431 in the United States, color like weights and measures have been standardized by the national bureau.

The definition of the word “measure” retains its ambiguity due to the diverse ways in which it is used in the various sentences. Nevertheless, the word itself seems to speak of a certain quality in the displayed photographs. This quality comes across perhaps most affectively through the colour scheme presented in the main story of the asylum centre, but can be recognised throughout the spaces of the images in the recurring and unrelenting straight lines and geometric shapes of the depictions. In the photographs, when a person is found between or within these lines or geometries, they rarely break the confines of the surrounding spaces, but appear to find themselves framed by the surrounding geometry. Rather than living beings in focus, the structures of the physical spaces come across as preceding the lives that are placed within them. In chapter one, as well as in the beginning of the present chapter, I describe the central role that photography has played, and still plays, in the structuring of a reality that aims to categorise the beings of the world according to different schemes. *False Witness* can be understood as bringing forth this role as an embodied encounter.

Bal and Hernández-Navarro discuss the materiality of the work of art and contrast this against critical and theoretical discourse, which, according to the authors, cannot quite grasp the movements of globalisation. These authors explain how theory can describe this movement, but always at a distance. They hold, however, that the artwork in its materiality “can reduce that distance, that divide, and demonstrate how artificially constructed it is”.<sup>189</sup> What is more, Bal and Hernández-Navarro write about “the messiness” of embodied reality and how, in particular, the often multimedia materiality of the artwork is able to convey this in a way that theory cannot: “[w]hereas discourse is desynchronized from reality, art, in its reception, its performance, is synchronized with the world to which it relates”.<sup>190</sup> As discussed above, the role of the photographs in these different contexts can then be seen in equally stark contrast to each other. On the one hand it increases the distance between the perceiver and the incarnated movements of the world, on the other it breaks down this very distance and brings about embodied engagements with precisely these movements.

In another project by Cennetoğlu, *Are there any palm trees in Grozny?* (2005), the artist utilises a politically charged situation in the area of Fenerbahçe in Istanbul

to explore a space of interaction between people and objects with drastically different roles. The work consists of a map, a text and a series of photographs presented as a slide show.<sup>191</sup> The photographs, which are grainy and taken from some distance using a zoom lens, bring to mind images from a surveillance camera, and at first glance seem to reveal little about the apparently mundane spaces that they depict. In certain of the images people can be seen in the distance. Some appear to be guards, police or military personnel, while others look like civilians. The map is of the same space as depicted in the photographs. Sections of the areas to which the map and photographs refer contain military zones, however. Therefore some regions of the map are filled with white space, as security concerns preclude their official mapping.<sup>192</sup> In the accompanying text, we learn that, in addition to the military barracks, the space documented and mapped also contains a beach club and a defunct recreational area for railway workers. What is more, unknown to most of the people living in the neighbourhood, at the time when Cennetoğlu made her investigation into the space, part of the defunct recreational area hosted some 160 Chechen refugees. As Cennetoğlu explains, this makeshift refugee camp had been constructed some time earlier as a temporary solution, entailing, as in so many other similar cases, a potential safety hazard for the refugees. The piece can be understood as taking on a situation local to the artist, which is also and inevitably connected to global matters. The most apparent of these concerns is the geopolitical inequality that places individuals in such close proximity to each other geographically, but at the same time in such drastically different worlds in terms of opportunities, rights, and so forth.

What is presented to the perceiver through the different media is thus a problematic and heterogeneous space, which connects directly to a range of pressing issues, including militarism and the control of citizens and non-citizens as well as nationalism, authoritarianism, and the vulnerability of refugees. The work might be understood as a representation of this space, or as a straightforward statement on socio-political injustice, the “state of exception” and the

189. Bal and Hernández-Navarro, *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture*, p. 12.

190. Ibid.

191. On the map, however, it states Bursa and not Istanbul. This is explained in the accompanying text as a result of military logic, apparently to confuse the potential viewer about which area is actually presented.

192. Google Earth, however, has fewer investments in maintaining the secrets of the Turkish armed forces; their satellite images reveal exactly what these military zones contain, rendering the efforts of the Turkish authorities somewhat redundant.



inhuman conditions of refugees. This being the case, however, the “message” risks coming across as too didactic, as if aiming to illustrate to the viewer the disparity of the situation. If viewed instead as a (linguistic, photographic and cartographical) *engagement* with this particular situated geographical space, then the work can be appreciated as opening up an understanding of aspects of this space to be affectively as well as cognitively experienced. In other words, the aim is less concerned with settling on the meaning of this work once and for all, but rather of paying attention to what kind of understandings appear through a particular affective encounter with the work.

As mentioned, the photographs of the slide show are dim and often grainy. This, combined with an awareness of the complex and unanticipated situation within this particular site, results in what comes across being the camera’s inability to draw something unequivocal out from the depths of this material space. The grey of the concrete blends with the blue-grey sky and pale sea. Even with a knowledge of what the space contains, it is difficult to tell if the dark figures silhouetting the bland background are military personnel, visitors to the beach club, or refugees. (fig. 36–37) The materiality of the space itself reveals very little and cannot give much more than a lingering sense of the desperate, frivolous or controlling lives and actions that are carried out in this locale. What the photographs *are* able to do, however, is to bring the nuance of sensation to the story hinted at in the text, as a reminder that resonates in physical space of the incarnation of this narrative in the ambiguities of situated space. While the inequities of so-called globalised movements and interactions can be cognised and mapped into abstract patterns and concepts, the work holds the potential for understanding how they, at the same time, always and inevitably remain incarnated and embodied in materiality and physicality; a carnal and emotive understanding with the potential to transform the willing perceiver on levels beyond what a didactic message is able to achieve. At the same time, the depiction itself only gives glimpses of the situation. It is up to the perceiver to find out more. Letting oneself be viscerally and emotionally affected is only the first step, and does not necessarily lead to caring or acting on what is experienced. For the willing recipient, however, the photographs can be seen as a way into a mode of concern, which would otherwise remain inaccessible.<sup>193</sup>

193. Laura Marks also talks of the affect of unfolding that occurs when images unfold through information in chapter eight of *Enfoldment and Infinity*.



36–37) Banu Cennetoğlu, *There are no palm trees in Grozny*, 2005. Courtesy of the artist





In his reflections on phenomenology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes about those ideas, or that understanding of the world, which is not a reduction of embodied experience. It is a mistake, he suggests, to think that significant knowledge about the world can be reached through “translat[ing] into disposable significations a meaning first held captive in the thing and in the world itself”.<sup>194</sup> While claiming that every effort to understand something is inevitably a distancing or a detachment from embodied experience, Merleau-Ponty explains how the common mistake (of the philosopher, the scholar, etc.) is to remain in this remote position, and assume that this is the space from which a meaningful understanding is to be achieved. Correcting this “error”, he writes about the necessity of “falling back” into undivided carnal experience, that “spatial and temporal pulp where individuals are formed by differentiation”,<sup>195</sup> or that intermundane space in which understanding has not yet been reduced to abstract ideas. As he puts it, “ideas that are too much possessed are no longer ideas”,<sup>196</sup> but are just a skeleton of an understanding that resides in the embodied and the incarnated. In Cennetoğlu’s piece, as well as the other series discussed in this chapter, it is possible to recognise how the photographs bring attention to the way certain events that relate to global patterns are incarnated within a particular situated space, and open up an affectual engagement with this space. The photographs thus serve to “de-possess” the ideas concerned and re-situate them in embodied experience.

The ideas of Merleau-Ponty are highly instrumental in clarifying the mistake and the loss involved in reducing knowledge and understanding to a distanced and detached view of the world from above. Nevertheless, he remains in his language with the generalising and neutralising notions of *Being* and the yet more evasive notion of *the flesh*, to refer to non-reduced embodied experience. Flesh is for Merleau-Ponty “the formative medium of the object and the subject”.<sup>197</sup> It is described as exceeding individual bodies and what is available to vision is only a small part of what the notion entails. It involves not only all that is perceived, but also all that is possible and the entire “atmosphere” within which these possibilities reside. By also describing thoughts and imagination as emanating from

194. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes* (Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 36.

195. Ibid., p. 114.

196. Ibid., p. 119.

197. Ibid., p. 147.

this primordial element of the flesh, every act and interaction becomes always and necessarily a “carnal relation”.<sup>198</sup> What he omits from his discussion, however, is an account of how particular differences are grounded in “the spatial and temporal pulp” of pre-discursive experience. As a consequence, his insights may be seen as insignificant in discussions of the injustices between opportunities and conditions between peoples left on opposite sides of the power positions of a globalised world. Contrary to this position, I would argue that the real significance of his insight is found when recognising and affectually engaging with the particular differences of an encounter in situated space; in the embodied realisation of the extent to which the differences and injustices of globalised space are situated in the spatial and temporal pulp of the flesh.

## Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion of European border controls and surveillance technology and the idea of “sightless vision” as intrinsic to these technologies. Against this background, I took a closer look at a number of works and projects that, in different ways, bring to perception that which is hidden, or kept enfolded, through such technologies. In relation to Carlos Zaya’s work, I argued that there is a potential for a subjective engagement with people who have become the objects of intense debate in the media, but whose voices are rarely heard. In relation to Coşkun Aral’s practice, I described the possibility of an affective understanding of the subjects and complex situations depicted. In Bradley Secker’s series, I described an opening up of an embodied recognition of the familiarity of grabbing one’s house keys, which comes across in stark contrast to the unfamiliar experience of having to flee one’s home and country.

198. What this perspective allows him to do, furthermore, is recognise the extent to which any conceptual division (between the objects and the subject, between the real and the imagined, and between the image and space) is a construction after the fact. This is not to say that they are false; as Merleau-Ponty makes clear the very idea of falsifying a fact is only made possible after having left the carnal experience, and lost “faith in the perceptual”. Rather, the significance lies in the recognition that these divisions are not traits of situated space itself, but are conceptual partitions, which have at times been useful to a certain type of dialogue about relations in the world, but which need to be discarded as new and more fruitful understandings become available. Ibid.

I also explained how Tina Enghoff's works bring attention to the negotiations of being an undocumented migrant as well as the manifold affective, material and physical aspects of these negotiations. Finally, I described how Banu Cennetoğlu's pieces bring out how certain events that relate to global patterns of movement are incarnated within a particular situated space, with the potential of opening up an affective engagement with this space as well.

What all of the above examples have in common is that they present a possibility of an affective and embodied engagement with aspects of that thickness and complexity of experience that is often bypassed through technologies of surveillance. I maintain throughout, however, that paying attention to these ways of unfolding remains as a potential or a possibility. It is not an inevitable consequence of the photographs or projects. A willing perceiver is necessary for this to occur. It should be recognised that, in some of the works, there are also mechanisms that may be seen to stand in the way of this unfolding. As I mentioned, a perceiver who is not already engaged may easily bypass Aral's works. And Zaya's compositions may be dismissed as sensationalist and even exploitative on account of their sheer magnitude. Enghoff and, perhaps in particular, Cennetoğlu's piece, on the other hand, may be experienced as inaccessible to someone not already familiar with some of the strategies and aesthetics of contemporary art. In the next chapter, I include works that move beyond the art world to discuss the idea of participation in relation to photography. I begin with a discussion on photography as an act to be engaged with (or not), rather than an object to be analysed. I then go on to reflect on the power relations involved in certain photographic acts. Throughout the chapter, I explore the possibility – or problem – of seeing these acts as agents of change within certain politically charged situations.

## Chapter 4

# Photography and Participation

*In which I explore what kinds of understandings emerge from perceiving photography as an act rather than as an object, how everyday examples of photographic acts function within the making and breaking of senses of belonging in politically charged situations, photography's potential for action and change, as well as the relationship between photography and power. The examples include the use of photography in social media during the uprisings in Istanbul in 2013 and 2014, a project by Serkan Taycan that relates to the political situation that underlay these events, an outreach project by Tina Enghoff, and the online project akaKurdistan by Susan Meiselas.*

## Photographic Acts

In *Touching Photographs* Margaret Olin reflects on photography in terms of "tactile looking", the significance of which lies in recognising photography as an act that *produces* more than it understands. Often enough, what is produced through these acts is relationships and communities, or, as is shown below, boundaries between communities. In this chapter, I explore what kinds of understandings emerge from perceiving photography as an act rather than as an object. I discuss how photographic acts participate in creating different senses of belonging, such as by being of a particular ethnicity or identifying with an activist group that shares a specific cause. While the previous chapters have looked mainly at artworks, this chapter also includes everyday examples of photographic acts and takes a closer look at how these function in the making and breaking

of such senses of belonging. What the different examples have in common is that they allow us to explore photography's role in relation to different senses of belonging in politically charged situations.

Picking up on the etymology of the word *photography*, Olin describes how the term

evokes both vision and touch, and in exploiting the slippage between the two parts of its name, photography gains power as a relational art, its meaning determined not only by what it looks like but also by the relationship we are invited to have with it.<sup>199</sup>

What comes into focus through the framing of photography as a relational art is not so much photographs in themselves, what they portray or how they portray, but rather the different ways through which people interact, engage or make or break connections through them. Olin brings up the example of a teenager taking a "selfie" and sending it to her partner. As Olin describes, what the photographer is enacting in this scenario is not so much the creation of a self-representation, but rather the acting out of a relationship in which the image becomes one of the participants. Rather than objects to be analysed, Olin writes about how the gestures around the making, sharing and viewing of photographs turn these images into "presences that populate the world like people and act within it to connect people."<sup>200</sup> Another example of such gesturing can be seen in the way a tourist views a particular site through the camera or camera phone as a socially acceptable way of engaging with, and trying to make sense of, a new space. As photography theorist Susan Sontag once famously expressed, the act of taking photographs becomes a way for the tourist to acquire a sense of control over an otherwise unfamiliar situation, of making an indefinable experience into an "event", or into something graspable. Referring to the way in which the act of taking pictures often has the ability to consecrate the commonplace into something significant, Sontag describes photography as "one of the principal devices for experiencing something, for giving an appearance of participation."<sup>201</sup> Sontag's reflections, as we have seen previously, involve

199. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, p. 3.

200. Ibid., p. 14.

201. Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 10.

a much more critical perspective on photographic acts, focusing on what they take away from these acts rather than what they bring to them. Nevertheless, she recognises the ways in which taking photographs involves (the appearance of) participating in some kind of event together with others, of attempting to make a connection in a situation when other ways of participating seem unavailable.

In *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11*, media theorist Richard Grusin reflects on the role that photographs played in the torture and abuse of prisoners by United States personnel stationed at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison in 2003 and 2004.<sup>202</sup> Grusin points out how the still common tendency to analyse such events through a representational logic, in which the photographs are understood as indexing prior events, fails to grasp what is at work in these events. Instead, and in line with the discussion of this chapter, Grusin brings out the extent to which the photographs of the Abu Ghraib scandal do not just testify to events that previously took place at the prison, but function in themselves as "specific, distinct media events with their own political and social consequences".<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, Grusin uses the psychoanalytical concept of "unknown knowns", or, as he describes, "the knowledge which doesn't know itself".<sup>204</sup> He draws attention to the "unknowns" that are built into contemporary media practices, or the kinds of knowledge that make up the "the hardware and software of our digital protocols".<sup>205</sup> This knowledge can be understood as all those embodied and affective acts through which we engage with digital technologies (and the image in all its manifestations), which we are only marginally, or not at all, aware of.<sup>206</sup> Significantly, these unknown digital protocols are described by the writer as functioning mainly beyond discursive realms, as "affective intensities", to use the Deleuzian terminology employed by Grusin. Reworking Nigel Thrift's "technological unconscious" into the "technological

202. Richard A. Grusin, *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

203. Ibid., p. 70.

204. Ibid., p. 71.

205. Ibid.

206. As Grusin mentions (and criticises for its representative logic), Slavoj Žižek brings in the idea of the "unknown knowns" in his analysis of the Abu Ghraib controversy, in order to bring attention to the "disavowed beliefs, suppositions and obscene practices", which the photographs bring to sight. Ibid., p. 71.

non-conscious”, media theorist Katherine Hayles furthermore describes how human behaviour is increasingly enmeshed in technological applications that shape actions and reactions on levels beyond conscious behaviour. According to Hayles, this involves repetitive and habitual behaviour such as “somatic responses, haptic feedback, [and] gestural interactions”.<sup>207</sup> In regards to the photographs of Abu Ghraib, Grusin’s attention to the affective elements of interactions with digital images and information allows him to bring to sight the extent to which the consumption of these photographs is continuous with everyday media practices. This includes the largely non-conscious habits of taking digital images, emailing them to friends, and sharing them through social media. For Grusin, the significance of the Abu Ghraib outrage is found not so much in what the photographs represent or express about the society in which they were taken, as has tended to be the focus of previous analyses. The significance, rather, lies in the continuity of the everyday embodied habitual behaviour through which these images were taken and shared. The familiarity of this connection together with the recognition of the embodied and affective protocols at work in these actions is, for Grusin, what underpins the photographs as “distinct media events” and is the source of understanding the effects and consequences of the scandal.

Furthermore, as Grusin points out, paying attention to images in terms of the embodied and affective acts with which they are engaged allows us to move beyond totalising narratives of psychoanalysis and ideology critique. Within these narratives, Grusin argues, the objects of attention are variously understood as disciplined or controlled “from above”, or perceived as either subverting or enabling the hegemony of global capital, patriarchy or ideology. What moving beyond these narratives then allows us to recognise is how they “work to enable particular forms of human action... from below”.<sup>208</sup> In other words, the attention moves from deconstructing hegemonic “truths” to noticing how affective and embodied behaviour participates in shaping human affiliations, as well as recognising affect as potential for action and change, or on a body’s potential to move from being affected into action. As such, looking at photographic acts in terms of affective and embodied undertakings allows us to see how these acts function as advocates of change, rather than just expressions or negations of narratives at play elsewhere.

207. Cited in Grusin *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11*, p. 72.

208. *Ibid.*, pp. 78–79.

## Photographic Acts of Resistance

One example of how photographic acts are able to function both to connect people and as instruments for change can be found in what became known as the Gezi protests in Turkey in 2013 and 2014. In May 2013, Gezi Park, one of the very few green areas in central Istanbul, was to be demolished and replaced by a replica of Ottoman artillery barracks and a shopping mall. The demolition of the park was only one of several major urban transformation projects that the ruling AKP government had planned, and in part carried out, in spite of warnings by environmentalists predicting that the natural resources of the area could be significantly depleted in the near future. Other such projects included the construction of a third bridge across the Bosphorus and the building of a second canal connecting the Black Sea with the sea of Marmara, otherwise known as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s “crazy project” (as Erdoğan himself at one point referred to it). While demonstrations against these initiatives had already occurred, it was only with the demolition of Gezi Park that the protest came to involve larger parts of the population and spread across the country. Like the various Occupy movements of the last decade, the Gezi protests in Istanbul and eventually across Turkey in 2013 and 2014 were made up of a mix of political and ideological affiliations.<sup>209</sup> What they all had in common, however, was a sense of urgency in their opposition to the government’s allegedly corrupt, neo-liberal urbanisation plans in general, and Prime Minister Erdoğan’s increasingly authoritarian tendencies in particular. The protests continued for several weeks, and came to involve opposition to excessive police violence, the censorship of the media, and corrupt uses of the judiciary to criminalise anyone involved in the protests, in addition to the discontent that triggered the demonstrations in the first place.

In the early days of the uprisings, for a period of nearly two weeks, before the occupiers were driven from the area by force, the park that was to be demolished was turned into a sanctuary, a space of embodiment of all that was neglect-

209. Including, but not limited to, football supporters, leftists, pro-Kurdish groups, republicans, Muslims against capitalism, feminists, and LGTB-groups. According to polls, however, most (between 70–80% according to two different polls) had no political affiliation. See Pelin Turgut, “Live from ‘Occupied’ Gezi Park: In Istanbul, a New Turkish Protest Movement Is Born”, *Time*, 14 May 2013, <<http://world.time.com/2013/06/05/live-from-occupied-gezi-park-in-istanbul-a-new-turkish-protest-movement-is-born/>>, accessed 2 February 2014.



ed or violently suppressed by the police and the government. Free of charge medical facilities, a food market, a library, a mini-museum, and cleaning and other services all carried out through voluntary labour were set up in the park, and different artistic performances, lectures and other “impossible-to-categorise manifestations of instantaneous creativity on the streets”,<sup>210</sup> were held every day. As Zeynep Gambetti describes, Gezi Park became a “space in which physical resistance could be transformed into a lifestyle”.<sup>211</sup> During the protests, the spirit of the demonstrations and the park turned political sanctuary were spread through tweets and photographs. As the government indirectly had control of most major news providers, the demonstrators and their supporters circulated images and stories from the events through social media and independent news and other websites to counter the propaganda produced by the government.<sup>212</sup> Thousands of photographs were shared on Facebook, tumblr, Instagram, and were collected on pages such as [showdiscontent.com](http://showdiscontent.com), etc. Many of the photographs served as evidence of the excessive violence of the police, or to strengthen the sense of community and togetherness of the protesters, as well as their resilience. Examples include a photograph of a man lying under a police vehicle to stop it from moving forward, people standing together holding arms or alone against the police, protesters being attacked with tear gas, people injured or being arrested by the police, or people sharing food or spending time together in the park during the time when it was occupied. Other images served as revelations of the fact that the demonstrators were from a wide variety of backgrounds and had differing political, cultural and religious affiliations, such as women in headscarves holding anti-government banners, or an older woman “chapulling”.<sup>213</sup> (fig. 38) The affective

210. Mutlu Yetkin, “The End of Cool Istanbul”, *Qantara*, 31 January 2014 < <http://en.qantara.de/node/17501> >, accessed 1 Feb 2014.

211. Zeynep Gambetti, “Occupy Gezi as Politics of the Body”, in Umut Ozkirimli (ed.), *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 96.

212. While the government did not “officially” control news outlets, it did so through indirect measures, such as supporting ownership of newspapers by people who are close to them. Since then, the control of media has been increasingly more overt. For instance, in 2016, one-third of the world’s imprisoned journalists were believed to be held in Turkey’s prisons. See Amnesty International, “Turkey: Journalism Is Not a Crime, Crackdown on media freedom in Turkey”, July 2016, < <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/02/free-turkey-media/> >, accessed 14 October 2017.

213. The word chapulling (*çapulculuk* in Turkish) was coined during the Gezi protests from Prime



and embodied acts of responding to such images online, through clicking on them to enlarge or save them, or through “liking” or sharing them, can be seen as a way of connecting and expressing a particular sense of belonging. These may include local and national groups that share these inclinations or groups that oppose the government or to a global anti-capitalist movement, with counterparts across the world in the Occupy movement and other protest movements.<sup>214</sup>

Minister Erdoğan’s use of the word *çapulcu*, meaning looters or marauders, to describe the protesters. The term was appropriated and, according to urban dictionary, has come to mean “resistance to force, demand justice, seek one’s right”. See: “chapulling”, < <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=chapulling> >, accessed 27 March 2018.

214. In 2011 uprisings in Egypt led to the fall of President Mohammed Morsi. In his discussion of these events, Ahmad Hosni speaks of the role a particular photograph had in creating a sense of community amongst a range of different groups as a virtual manifestation that eventually translated itself into massive demonstrations in Tahrir Square. The photograph

38) Gezi demonstrations, 2013, © NarPhotos

Remaining for a moment with the act of “clicking”, Olin points out how the interactive and tactile aspects of this act return us to a discourse of vision and touch, which has remained dormant for some time. As we saw in the last chapter, Merleau-Ponty talks about the mistake of distancing oneself too early from embodied experience in the endeavour to understand something, and of the necessity of remaining with carnal experience at the point when sense perceptions have not yet been divided. Until recently, this focus on the inseparability of the senses, and of touch and vision in particular, has largely been overlooked in favour of theories of the “gaze”, and questions of “what happens when someone looks at us or we look at someone”.<sup>215</sup> With the act of “clicking”, however, when it comes to whether to enlarge an image, move on to another, “like” or share it with others, the idea of the inseparability of touch and vision becomes an actuality, rather than a theoretical argument. With the help of media theorist Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Olin describes how the possibility of tactilely interacting with what is presented on the screen offers a sense of power to the perceiver.<sup>216</sup> This could involve the power of the online activist to “change the world” or the power of expressing one’s (non-)belonging to a particular group or cause, through the click of the mouse. Furthermore, cultural theorist Sara Ahmed suggests thinking of affective and embodied acts, such as the acts of “clicking” to view, like, or share an image, as *sticky*, or as “what sustains or preserves the

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of which he speaks is that of Khaled Saïd who was brutally beaten to death on the street by two police officers in the spring of 2010. The photograph, together with the graphic accounts of witnesses of the brutality of the police as well as the man’s pleading for his life, was spread around social media and was also the focus of a website dedicated to the deceased called “We are all Khaled Saïd”. As Hosni describes, beyond functioning as a testimony to the violence of the police, the image as well as the internet domain “functioned as a site of consensus – a site where a growing community was being contoured”. As such, Hosni draws attention to the way in which the photograph, as an appearance, functions as an element that modified the sphere that it entered, “manifesting virtual subjects in the virtual space, and moves to the actual space as bodies manifest in their convergence on the streets”. Rather than confirming a prior event, the image can be seen to enter space and transform it, making it a trigger for change and an element around which to gather. Ahmad Hosni, “Revolution as Aesthetics (Part I)”, *Interartive*, 60, 2014. <<http://interartive.org/2014/03/issue-60-february-2014/>>, accessed 1 May 2014.

215. As put by Grusin, *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11*, p. 79.

216. Olin, *Touching Photographs*.

connection between ideas, values and objects”.<sup>217</sup> In this way, there is a constant interchange between the affective experience of, for example, an image shared on a social media site and the evaluation of that object, which shapes – as Ahmed puts it – “how bodies turn towards things”.<sup>218</sup> Ahmed brings in phenomenologist Edmund Husserl’s discussion of the “affective interest” towards certain things, as objects that form “our near sphere” or “core sphere”.<sup>219</sup> For Ahmed, it is around the orientation towards or away from objects that we can observe the formation of groups. We can feel ourselves belonging if we experience delight or distaste in the same objects. As such, we invest in the visceral experience of certain objects, as (in Ahmed’s example) objects that make us happy: “[h]appy objects are passed around, accumulating positive affective value as social goods”.<sup>220</sup> When we experience such objects as good, we are aligned with the group, whereas a feeling of alienation comes from not experiencing as pleasurable objects which the group otherwise has attributed as being good. The “liking” of images shared on social media, such as the visceral reaction to images can, then, be seen as functioning to re-enforce a sense of local, national or global belonging, or of having a shared cause.

Returning to the Gezi photographs, we can see how they function not only to engage audiences within Turkey in the demonstrations, but also to gain support from abroad. For instance, the striking photograph of a woman in a red dress being doused by tear gas was turned into a symbol of the events as a whole. (fig. 39) It, together with a photograph of a dancing dervish with a gas mask and a woman seeming to welcome the water from a water canon with open arms, were disseminated widely across social media. Moreover, they were made into stencils and posted across the square and elsewhere. (fig. 40) Arresting and iconic images such as these have a particular power to attract distant audiences and enlist their support. At the same time, however, it needs to be borne in mind that these depictions of political events are likely to elicit a hasty “like” and “share” whenever they are distributed on social media alongside private images. In addition to engaging people to support the demonstrators, the sense of belonging created through this affective technologically enmeshed

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217. Sara Ahmed, “Happy Objects”, in Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 29.

218. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

219. *Ibid.*

220. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, p. 11.



39) A Turkish riot policeman uses tear gas against a woman during Gezi protests. 2013, Osman Orsal  
© Reuters



40) "The more you press, the bigger it gets", stencil, Gezi Park. 2013, © Christiane Gruber



"likin" and "sharing" also makes invisible many of the historical, political, social and cultural differences between events taking place in different sites across the world. Like most photographs, and in particular ones that come to represent larger scale political or historical events, the photographs are highly effective in terms of the affective reactions they trigger, while they convey few, if any, facts about the situation at hand. Much of the discussion of this book has focused on affective experiences of photographs in terms of how they are able to open up understandings and investigations that would otherwise remain unavailable. The case remains, however, as Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Krauer and their followers have argued time and time again, that the ability of photographs to trigger visceral reactions often creates a false sense of "knowing" an event, thereby making invisible its inner dynamics. The political, cultural, social, financial and historical situation in Istanbul is not the same as Cairo, New York, or Rio de Janeiro. Nevertheless, expressions on social media frequently give the impression that demonstrators in all these locations are fighting a common enemy, of neo-liberal thoughtlessness and greed. As I elaborate on in the following, it is in relation to this impression of sameness that the specific situated artworks dealing with this "image archive" gain particular significance.

It is clear that digitally sharing images, and reacting to digitally shared images, create and maintain senses of belonging as "sticky" as any offline community, and that these two realms are inextricably intertwined. Furthermore, many of the photographs from the Gezi protests – what they portray, how they portray as well as how they are reworked into stencils and posters spread across the country and online across the world – express a strong sense of creativity, which stands in stark contrast to the neo-liberal urbanisation plans that they oppose.<sup>221</sup> The government went to great lengths to try to expose the protesters as vandals and, arguably, a handful of activists went on to prove them right. Nevertheless, the great majority made a point of maintaining non-violent protests. Many also made great efforts to express their discontent in peaceful and innovative ways, not only offering resistance, but actual alternatives to the nondescript consumer-oriented urbanisation plans of the government. On 17 July 2013 the so-called "Standing Man" (Duran Adam) stood in Taksim Square for eight hours to draw

221. See Aslı İğsız, "Brand Turkey and the Gezi Protests: Authoritarianism in Flux, Law and Neoliberalism" and Ömür Harmanşah, "Urban Utopias and How They Fell Apart: The Political Ecology of Gezi Park", in Umut Ozkirimli (ed.), *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).



attention to police violence. The depiction of the standing man was widely distributed. (fig. 41) So too were images of the actions it inspired, including other silent demonstrations of people lying down, reading, and meditating.



41) *Standing man*, 2013, © Nar Photos

The standing man's call to stop and look, listen, or just *be*, gets its relevance not only when held against the plans of the Islamic neo-liberalism of the AKP, but against authoritarianism and neo-liberal globalisation in general. The "standing man" seems to ask for a pause in the relentless building frenzy of the neo-liberal urbanisation plans. Other photographs from the Gezi protests show people giving music or dance performances, meditating, delivering a maths lecture, doing yoga, reading – all acts of expression that, it could be argued, have not place in the government's standardised consumer-oriented urbanisation plans. (fig. 42–43) For the willing recipient, these images, as shared globally across



42–43) *Library and Yoga classes in occupied Gezi park*, 2013, © NarPhotos



social media and websites, serve as a trigger, or reminder, not only to resist, but to continue to create life-affirming alternatives to authoritarianism and thoughtless neo-liberalism across the globe.



I now turn to an art project that initiates particular kinds of acts against the political background described above. *Between Two Seas* (2014 and ongoing), by Turkish artist Serkan Taycan, is the third part of a photography project that documents rural, suburban and urban parts of Turkey through some of the drastic changes that the country has experienced in the last decade. In chapter five and six I take a closer look at the first part of the series, *Habitat*, which travels through rural areas in search of the meaning of belonging in relation to the land. The third part of the series, *Between Two Seas*, takes on the urbanisation of Istanbul, and in particular the planned canal project “Kanal Istanbul”, mentioned above. In the piece, Taycan walked the sixty-nine kilometres that the canal covers, taking one photograph per kilometre, moving from pastoral landscapes through villages and along the highly urbanised areas around the highways. Through exhibiting the images that he takes along the way, Taycan shares his experience of these areas prior to, and sometimes during, their construction. The visual material show the roads and the paths followed along the walk, the sea on each side and urban as well as rural sites along the way. (fig. 44) However, as a part of the project, Taycan also created a map of the terrain that he covered, guiding others who want to follow the same path and get their own experience of the area to be transformed. The work invited people to follow the

44) Serkan Taycan,  
*Between two Seas*,  
detail, installation  
view 13th Istanbul  
Biennial Galata  
Greek School, 2013,  
© Serkan Taycan



three-day walk on their own, but also set up group walks that would follow the path, together with the artist, on several occasions. On the project’s Facebook site, everyone who participates in the walks is able to upload images of their own experience. Since initiated, hundreds of people have taken part and shared their photographs on the site. The photographs range from perfectly composed landscapes and shots of picturesque scenery, to group pictures of people walking, waving to the camera and resting along the side of the road as well as images documenting curious finds along the path, such as plants, animals, political posters or buildings. (fig. 45) The artist’s own images from his first walk have been curated into an ensemble of its own and exhibited in places such as the Istanbul Biennial (2013) and Helsinki Photomedia (2014). The act of encouraging others to traverse the path, take their own pictures, share them, and in turn encourage others to participate, however, gives the work a life of its own outside of the gallery space, turning the project into whatever people taking part make it. While the images as shared on the Internet can be fleetingly browsed, the slowness of participating in the act by taking the three-day walk between the two seas becomes necessarily a contemplative experience, a step back from the relentless pace of both online image consumption and mega urban transformation projects. The act of walking as well as of bringing one’s own camera to this act and documenting what is seen becomes a way of affectively and physically engaging with the site and transformations that are taking place. Taycan’s own photographs as exhibited in the Biennial or in galleries, meanwhile, can be understood as an invitation to contemplate the images precisely as images. Over the last decades, in tandem with the rise of digital technologies, the meaning and experience of seeing prints on a wall has been transformed. The size and the materiality of the prints, as well as the way they are positioned – often in isolation surrounded by a white wall – invites a kind of contemplation that is

45) Serkan Taycan,  
*Group Walks, Be-  
tween Two Seas*, 2013,  
© Serkan Taycan

rarely available when seen as one of many objects on a cluttered screen or as a part of a flow of visual data. While the digital site of perception tends to be full of other information (moving/still images, text, sound) and/or in constant motion, the space of the gallery wall tends to be still and free from that which is deemed to interfere with the direct experience of the images. As none of the acts involved in the project – walking, sharing online, exhibiting/observing in the gallery – can be understood separately from the ongoing political, economic, cultural, social and environmental developments, nor can they be understood as distinct from one another.<sup>222</sup>

The acts that are carried out in relation to these photographs, then, can be seen to affectively connect people (or keep them apart) against (or for) a particular cause, open up a space of contemplation, or call into question the governmental plans in particular, and an authoritative and/or neo-liberal agenda in general. The significance of these acts, however, is less perceivable through a representative logic of the photographs taken, shared or exhibited, and more effectively identifiable through an ontological model, which takes them on precisely as affective and embodied *acts*. The images function within these acts, as Ahmed explained above, as objects that accumulate positive (or negative) affective value as they are passed around; or, as we have seen elsewhere in this book, as potential affective triggers to contemplate, experience an alternative to, or act against the authoritativeness, corruption and recklessness of the Turkish (and other) government(s).<sup>223</sup>

222. Andre Lemos describes how the city, urbanity and mobility need to be understood within the media framework of post-mass media. With new possibilities for movement, involving not only physical mobility but virtual/informational movement as well, the city, as Lemos explains, is “not only a ‘point of presence’ but also a general environment of connection (mobile wireless Internet, cell phones..., involving the user (both for production of information content and for control and surveillance)”. The result is not a lack of a sense of place (or a “no place” as Paul Virilio puts it), but rather a transformed sense of place and of mobility, one that involves the physical dimensions as well as the electronic flows – producing and consuming experiences of space and movement in a wider sense. Andre Lemos, “Post-Mass Media Functions, Locative Media, and Informational Territories: New Ways of Thinking About Territory, Place, and Mobility in Contemporary Society”, *Space and Culture*, 13/4, 2010.

223. Connecting this discussion with that of the archive in chapter one, Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme seem to be describing an act such as that of Taycan’s project through the

## Photographic Power

In *Photography as Activism*, photographer Michelle Bogre focuses on the work of her fellow professionals in a language that clearly aims to set right much of traditional photography theory. In the last chapter of the book, titled “Constructing a better world”, she presents a list of individuals and groups that, in one way or another, work with photography to create change or educate. The title itself clearly exemplifies the author’s effort to go against much of established critical photography theory, in order to present photographic acts as potentially philanthropic. Throughout the book, she describes the making of, and idealism behind, contemporary activist documentary photography, which she defines as “a hybrid blend of photojournalism, art photography, and documentary that moves seamlessly between the editorial, online, and gallery worlds”, and whose synthesis she locates in time at the end of the twentieth century.<sup>224</sup> On several occasions, the intentions and methods of such activist documentary photography are presented against the thoughtlessness of journalism, the aim of which is seen as first and foremost finding a good story. For example, photographer and activist Stephen Shames is quoted as explaining that he left journalism because of his unwillingness to look for the sensational. He goes on to describe how he tired of the negativity: “I think journalism tries to ‘unheal’ us. And I wanted to heal society”.<sup>225</sup> Bogre’s argument throughout the book is very much simplified for the purpose of presenting photography as inherently philanthropic and correcting all those who have argued against its merits. Nevertheless, what also comes up in many of the descriptions, and is significant for the discussion at hand, is the way that photography is accounted for not first and foremost

terminology of archives, contrasting the living common archive with those imposed from above: “For us the vitality that turns the archive into something living is fundamentally connected to a moment of political becoming, when the individual through a subjective gesture or act becomes part of a common moment and articulates the potential of the multitude. Here the very act of producing and sharing subjective, horizontal archives is precisely about the instance on and the fight for a living common archive, from the ground up.” Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, “The Archival Multitude”, *Journal of Visual Culture* 12/3, pp. 345–363.

224. Michelle Bogre, *Photography as Activism: Images for Social Change* (Amsterdam & Boston: Focal Press, 2012), p. 48.

225. Stephen Shames founded L.E.A.D., a non profit organisation in Uganda that locates forgotten children. Cited in Michelle Bogre, *Photography as Activism*, p. 61.

in terms of what it represents, but what it does. In the words of Glenn Ruga, cofounder of *socialdocumentary.net*, “the power of the work is to make change. It’s not strictly to represent something out there in the world, but the act of presenting this work and looking at this work itself can make change.”<sup>226</sup> While Bogre describes reflections on memory and identity as the conceit of “contemporary ‘fine art’ documentary”, the focus of activist documentary photography is precisely to make things happen.<sup>227</sup> In this endeavour, the ability of photographs to provoke emotion and appeal to sensory as well as cognitive faculties makes it the ultimate tool for social and political change. That which has been an issue of such harsh criticism in photography theory throughout large parts of the last century returns here as the main strength of the photographic medium.<sup>228</sup> The aim of raising this argument at this point is not to repeat Bogre’s mostly uncritical praise of the potential and actual deeds of activist photography, but to reinforce the point about seeing photography as an act, the performance of which is determined by the context in which it might occur. Perceiving a photograph as an image – as an object to be analysed – is just one possible, and not necessarily the most fruitful or conducive, way of perceiving how the medium functions.

Furthermore, Bogre’s book brings out how the ambition in much of activist photography, as I touched upon in the last chapter, is to overcome another major point of criticism of much photography theory, namely the power of the photographer over the subject. In *On Photography*, Sontag famously compares the act of photographing with rape. This analogy brings out how taking an image of someone can be seen as gaining knowledge about that person, which that person is unable to possess themselves, thereby reifying them into an object while the photographer remains a subject. We have seen throughout this book

226. Ibid., p. 48.

227. In his article on the Gezi protests, Mutlu Yetkin can be understood to be making a similar argument when he says that “[e]ngaging the now... can be more rewarding than obsessing over identity matters”. Yetkin, “The End of Cool Istanbul”.

228. After describing the work of *The Farm Security Administration* (FSA) photographers, Bogre describes how their work “firmly established the fact that photographs were, and continue to be the most effective method of communicating a verifiable truth about social injustice while evoking an emotional response from the viewer. That emotional response provokes action(s), putting pressure on those with the power to do something”. Bogre, *Photography as Activism: Images for Social Change*, p. 46.

that photographic acts function in many different, and sometimes contrasting ways. As Azoulay points out, photographed subjects often participate actively in the photographic act, or initiate the photographic act themselves, even when enduring extreme hardship.<sup>229</sup> The act of being photographed also entails the possibility of recognition, or the potential of being seen/heard within a framework that offers different possibilities than the institutional structures that place or keep them within the situation of hardship. Nevertheless, Sontag’s criticism, while perhaps overstated by theorists and critics, points to a major concern in much documentary photography in particular. As I have discussed, some photographers/activists have tried to rectify this by handing over the camera to individuals or groups and, sometimes, though not necessarily, teaching them techniques to improve their power to represent themselves and their environment.<sup>230</sup>

In the previous chapter, I explored Tina Enghoff’s collaboration with undocumented migrants in Copenhagen. I mentioned how Enghoff often works with outreach projects and spends much time reflecting on the power relations between her and the people that she works with. She describes how the camera is particularly powerful in these kinds of projects since, unlike other art forms such as writing or drawing, it is possible to use a camera without any previous training.<sup>231</sup> Whilst the results may vary greatly between photographs taken by a trained photographer and amateur, the fact remains that in photography it is the technology that takes care of the actual image making. Putting the camera in the hands of others can be seen as one way of bypassing the risk of enacting some kind of “secondary violence” through photographing. At the same time, it

229. Reflecting on the manifold and often contrasting ways that photography is able to function, Azoulay describes the gaze of “the photographed subject, which can vary enormously between sharp, probing, passive, exhausted, furious, introverted, defensive, warning, aggressive, full of hatred, pleading, unbalanced, skeptical, cynical, indifferent, or demanding”. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, pp. 18–20.

230. In the introduction, I referenced Fred Ritchin’s description of how photographers (and other practitioners using photography) are finding new strategies to engage audiences. In his description of a number of examples, which include works by Susan Meiselas that I discuss below and Ariella Azoulay, Ritchin writes about how many of these involve working directly with “subjects in relationships that can be supportive and at times possibly even healing”. Ritchin, *Bending the Frame*, p. 43.

231. From a conversation with Enghoff, January 2016.



is clear that handing the camera over to others in a collaborative project never bypasses entirely the question of power in relation to image-making, especially when working with people already in marginalised positions.

In one of her projects, *Part of Valby*, made between 2012 and 2015, Enghoff worked with groups of children and teenagers in Folehaven, Hornemanns Vænge and Valbyejendommene, which are all socially marginalised areas outside Copenhagen. In the project, Enghoff made three videos together with the children and teenagers, which were then projected around the neighbourhood as well as shown at the yearly art video festival in Nikolaj, Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center.<sup>232</sup> One of the videos, *The Lie Detector* (2013), is made by a group of boys from the area. They came up with the idea of exploring lie detection because of their own experience of being made suspects whenever something bad happens in the area. The short edited film (approx. nine minutes) is made up of moving and still images shot by the boys themselves together with Enghoff. It consists of four parts, which are interspersed with still images that in different ways relate to the accounts told, and reflections given, in each part. The film starts with still images of the boys hanging around the playground, laying in the grass, holding their arms around each other, playing around, as well as a close-up of a broken window followed by an image of two hands giving a thumbs up gesture. Part one *Hærværk* (Vandalism) shows some of the boys filming each other with a hand-held camera whilst walking around their school area looking at patched up windows. (fig. 46) One of the group points out the different broken windows of the schoolyard, convincingly explaining how he and his friends were the ones to break them. He is asked why and answers that there just isn't much else to do around there. One child also talks about how they started a fire in one of the classrooms. As the scenery then switches, we see one of the boys standing in the park saying: "that was the whole story. But I'll tell you something", he adds, with a broad smile: "It was all a lie". This part is then followed by still shots. These include close-ups of flowers, a scene showing one of the boys in the grass surrounded by flowers, and an abandoned bicycle. (fig. 47) Part two of the short film is called *Havfruen* (the Mermaid). It consists of one of the children telling and defending a story of how he saw a

232. In other projects, Enghoff has worked with young people in Greenland, also making films and still image projects based on their own experiences and reflections. All can be found at <<http://www.tinaenghoff.com>>, accessed January 2015.



46–47) Tina Enghoff, *The Lie Detector* Film Still 2013. Courtesy of the artist

mermaid. In part three *Hævn* (Revenge) we hear another tale, which is partly re-enacted. It too is revealed to be a lie. The fourth and final part, *Politiet* (The Police), sees the boys trying on bullet-proof vests and exploring the inside of a police station/prison. Throughout, we hear reflections about falsehood and truth, our understanding of what we think we know, and strategies for telling if someone is lying.

Enghoff expresses the hope that these collaborations will be a trigger for



something constructive and positive in the lives of the young people with whom she works. However, the principal aim is not to achieve some predetermined future outcome. Instead, it is to make interesting short films exploring the subjects of identity, belonging, knowledge, trust, truth and lies. The purpose of these projects can be found in the very acts of taking the images and editing the films, as well as projecting and showing them in particular settings. This process explores what can, and cannot, appear through such actions. The outcomes are twofold. The first relates to power relations, which are engaged with and not, as mentioned, bypassed: the camera changes hands such that the perceived becomes the perceiver. Secondly, the initiative tackles what it means to explore one's surroundings with camera in hand; the act of being a producer, in contrast to being produced by, or being a passive participant within, these power relations. As Olin points out, in particular since the sixties or seventies, when criticism of disempowerment through photography began to be voiced with particular indignation, giving "photographic voice to the dispossessed and silenced became a strategy – and a romance".<sup>233</sup> As a strategy, the ambition of participatory photography may be criticised for not living up to its own ideals, for example by aestheticizing situations of deep injustice, or taking on a paternalistic position in relation to often-marginalised subjects.<sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, what many of the projects testify to is the potential of the technology of photography to function as a medium for engaging with one's social, political, and ecological environment, as well as – as I now go on to discuss further – to gather around and exchange.

### Photographic Community

In *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Azoulay writes about a new community, in part virtual and in part actual, created through novel uses of photography. She describes this grouping as "a new political community of people between whom political relations were not mediated by a sovereign ruling power that governed a given territory".<sup>235</sup> Azoulay goes on to explain how, when a ruling

233. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, p. 6.

234. See *ibid.*, p. 136.

235. Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, pp. 22–23.

power interferes with the events within this community, it does not do so from a privileged position, but as one participant amongst many. Contrary to expectations, this emergent community to which she refers are not the kinships of twenty-first century online communication. They are instead those that formed in the middle of the nineteenth century through some of the very first uses of photographic technology. The example she provides is that of Captain Jonathan Walker who, in 1845, had his hand photographed by the Boston studio of photographers Albert Sands and Josiah Johnson Hawes, showing the branding of his hand with the letters "SS" for "slave stealer". This marker was part of his punishment, together with imprisonment and a fine, for attempting to smuggle slaves northwards out of Florida. Having the daguerreotype copied (presumably through lithography or engraving), Walker distributed the image as a protest against the sentencing. Azoulay argues that, as a result, the "SS" was subsequently reinterpreted as meaning "slave saviour". The community that Azoulay speaks of, then, is made up both of the imagined spectators that Walker and the photographers saw before them as they went about making the image, and the actual people that came across, shared and were in different ways affected by the image as it was distributed.

Much photography theory has tended to favour a perspective that perceives photographs as representations (or failed such) of events going on elsewhere. However, as the example above demonstrates so effectively, engaging with photographs as an *act* (taking them, being affected by them, sharing, and making connections through them) is not a new phenomenon. What Azoulay proposes, however, is that in order to grasp the significance and function of this engagement, a new ontological-political understanding of photography is needed; a theory that

takes into account all the participants in photographic acts – camera, photographer, photographed subject, and spectator – approaching the photograph (and its meaning) as an unintentional effect of the encounter between all of these.<sup>236</sup>

Significantly, as she goes on to explain, none of these participants hold the power to "seal off this effect" and determine the outcome of the encounter.<sup>237</sup>

236. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

237. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Like Olin and Grusin above, Azoulay, then, places photography in an inter-relational space, considering photographs as objects to be with or meet, as they affect you and how you relate to them in situated context, rather than as a representation of something going on elsewhere. Azoulay goes as far as to argue that it is only through relationality that photography becomes something – anything at all.<sup>238</sup>

As it stands, however, photography is still largely perceived with what Azoulay calls “the wrong users’ manual”, which reduces photography to a representation and which relegates the perceiver’s relation to photographs to one of trying to identify what it represents, rendering the photograph “distinct, accessible, readily available, easy to capture, and open to ownership and exchange”.<sup>239</sup> This incorrect instruction manual, she seems to be saying, makes us blind to photography’s potential to act in other ways – such as, for example, of connecting people or of triggering action and thought. Azoulay points to photography as an encounter, which takes place every day, often without being noticed; a meeting between people who take, observe, and show photographs. In this sense, photographs become one material object (even if it is in its digital form) in an encounter in which also different forms of subjectivity and othering are re-iterated and re-negotiated.<sup>240</sup> In chapter one, I discussed how the “coming alive” of

238. A connection can be made to Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory, in which objects are treated as being of equal significant to humans within social networks. As in my discussion here, within Actor-Network Theory the focus remains with embodied experience, and the aim is to ignore preexisting knowledge in one’s approach to a particular phenomenon. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

239. Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography*, p. 14.

240. In the research project “Collaboration: Revisiting the History of Photography” Azoulay, together with Wendy Ewald and Susan Meiselas, take on the task of setting right that which the history and theory of photography has excluded, by revisiting the history of photography from the perspective of collaboration. The aim of the project is to draft a timeline of collaborative photographic projects. The items on that chronology have been gathered by Azoulay, Ewald and Meiselas together with members from the public and graduate students from Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design. The timeline is made into different clusters including “collaboration as the production of alternative and common histories; as a means of creating new potentialities in given political regimes of violence; as a framework for collecting, preserving, and studying existing images, as a basis for establishing civil archives for unrecognized, endangered, or oppressed communities; as a vantage point to reflect on relations of co-laboring that are hidden, denied, compelled,

the wallpaper in one of İnci Eviner’s pieces was significant in that wallpaper can be seen to guide our perceptions of the world beyond our deliberate gaze. In the same way, as I have also touched upon, the “planted images” that Azoulay talks of generally function beyond our conscious attention. Similarly, Olin writes about how certain images function to “establish milieu for real people, their viewers, to dwell and walk among”.<sup>241</sup> She goes on to describe how images are often treated like part of the furniture or architecture. Even, or maybe in particular, when they are not given much attention, whether they are reproduced in a newspaper, hung on the wall of one’s home or a community building, or shared online, they may function to maintain a particular community. The role of images in creating such feelings of shared communities becomes all the more significant when it is geographically dispersed, meaning that most of the members have not met in person.

While, as we have seen, photography’s function in forming new communities is far from a novel phenomenon, media theorist Andre Lemos describes what he calls a “post-mass media” state of affairs, in which images and information find new ways of reaching an audience through, for example, blogs, social media networks, and independent online news sites.<sup>242</sup> For Lemos, the post in post-mass media is not to be understood in terms of replacing what used to be mass media, but should instead be recognised as appearing together with, and sometimes merging with, more traditional media such as television and printed newspapers (such as the comments function of many online media outlets). According to Lemos, post-mass media is characterised by communication travelling from everyone to everyone, as opposed to mass media, which tends to be one-directional.<sup>243</sup> While mass media deals with information, the function of post-mass media can be said to be communication. Traditional media pass on information to the masses through selected images usually taken by professional journalists or photographers. New media, in contrast, deal with communication amongst

imagined, or fake.” Ariella Azoulay, Wendy Ewald, and Susan Meiselas, “Collaboration: Revisiting the History of Photography”, *Aperture in Person*, <<http://aperture.org/event/collaboration-revisiting-history-photography/>>, accessed 1 May 2014.

241. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, p. 101.

242. Lemos, “Post-Mass Media Functions”.

243. Today, however, rather than communication between everyone, what we are seeing can be described as increased tribalisation, where people tend to communicate with people to whom they already agree (e.g. in terms of political ideology).

the masses, such as the exchange of experiences and ideas through photo-blogs and networks like Instagram, Fotolog and Flickr. Rather than reception, post-mass media is based on production and interaction. The phenomenon of photographic communities is not, then, a function of a post-mass media state of affairs. Nevertheless, as Olin points out, social networking and other websites “differ in that, like many modern uses of photography, they regard community as the focus of their interchange”.<sup>244</sup>

In the remainder of this chapter, I dig deeper into the relationship between photography and the processes through which community is created in relation to an ongoing photography-based online project dealing with Kurdish senses of belonging. In their differing accounts of the ways in which photographs act in the world, Olin and Bogre both dwell on the work of American photographer Susan Meiselas, who has worked with empowerment photography in different parts of the world. In these projects, Meiselas often involves the words of the people she photographs. What is more, in some of them, such as her projects in Nicaragua, she travels back with her images to the places where she took them to try to build conversations around the images and what they depict. In the project *akaKURDISTAN*, she takes the potential of photography in creating communities one step further, by creating a “visualised community” for a group of people whose sense of belonging has been a subject of contestation for centuries. She does this at first in the form of a book, *KURDISTAN: In the Shadow of History* plus a number of exhibitions, and eventually in the shape of a continuously expanding website: *akaKurdistan: A Place for Collective Memory and Cultural Exchange*.<sup>245</sup> The initiative began in the early 1990s with a trip to Northern Iraq during which Meiselas documented the mass graves and destroyed villages

244. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, p. 158.

Speaking of different functions of smart phones such as locative media, Lemos similarly describes how they “help... create new forms of appropriation of the urban space, new form of communities and... new senses of places and territorialisation.” Lemos, “Post-Mass Media Functions”, p. 408.

245. On the web page, the site is described “as a borderless space, [which] provides the opportunity to build a collective memory with a people who have no national archive”. Susan Meiselas, “Akakurdistan”, <<http://www.akakurdistan.com/kurds/stories/index.html>>, accessed 10 February 2014.

of Saddam Hussein’s Al-Anfal Campaign in the late 1980s.<sup>246</sup> Returning to the area after the initial expedition, Meiselas started to pay attention to photographs of, and stories about, the Kurdish people that she encountered. Eventually, she gave up taking photographs herself in order to focus on the archiving of images and stories of Kurdish history. It is parts of this archive that were published as a book in 1997, exhibited in a number of locations around the world, and which now lives on, and is continuously expanded, on the website.

In the online version one can choose from thumbnail images on a timeline. This in turn opens up a set of additional images together with a description or a story. The subjects shown and told include first-hand accounts of families or individuals that relate in different ways to their own identity as Kurds, complemented with newspaper clippings and official accounts of historic events. One of the stories describes the life of Gülizar, who was born in 1955 in a small village in the province of Dersim (Tunceli) in eastern Turkey. We learn that she was never formally educated since the school was too far away. As a result, Gülizar never learned Turkish. This led to problems when, as a grown woman with a family of her own, she and her family were put under pressure by the local police, accused of giving aid to Kurdish guerrillas. We also discover that the area in which she lived eventually became uninhabitable because of the fighting between the Turkish army and the guerrillas. Gülizar was thus forced to move, first to İzmir and then to the Netherlands. In one of the images (a small colour photograph from the late seventies) we see Gülizar in front of what we may assume to be her house in Dersim together with her seven children. (fig. 48) The edges of the photograph are overexposed and the colours somewhat faded. Because of the size of the image, it reveals little in terms of detail. However, it appears as if Gülizar and her older daughters are smiling into the sun or the camera. A jovial impression and a sense of togetherness is fostered by the manner in which they stand close together, with two small children sitting in front and an older boy sticking his head out from behind his sister in the back. In another image we see a portrait of Gülizar wearing a loose white headscarf around her neck and looking directly into the camera with a somewhat disconcerted expression. (fig. 49) The text tells us that the picture is taken in 1990, before she left Dersim with her children. This was a time when,

246. As the geographical area of Kurdistan does not follow existing national borders, the project travels along territory that now forms part of both Iraq and Turkey.



48) †İlsu-Dallıbahçe (Dersim/Tunceli), around 1978, from *akakurdistan.com*, photographer unknown



49) ♀Gülizar, around 1990, from *akakurdistan.com*, photographer unknown

we are told, Gülizar was “very, very uncertain and worried about the future”. In the description of the photograph, we find out that the image was sent by the oldest daughter to her father who had already moved to the Netherlands, with the inscription: “Daddy, I send you this picture. Mamma knows nothing”. The affectivities of these images, together with the details provided in the text, is what makes them “sticky” in Ahmed’s sense of the word. Their stickiness turns them into the glue around which the wider personal as well as political events are constructed and reinforced. As I describe further below, elsewhere on the site the facts and details around posted images are disputed, as are historical and political facts surrounding the Kurdish people in general. The images and story of Gülizar and her family, however, can be seen as functioning beyond such contestations, as objects around which affective and embodied acts of belonging are carried out.

In terms of belonging, the function of the photographs in these, and, I would argue, many other situations, is not generally to serve as an illustration of a wider narrative, but as a particularly potent sticky object through which affective stories of belonging can be told (as well as contested). Or, in Olin’s words,

[a]n image does not draw people together because it reflects a basic truth about

that people, or because it represents their myth about themselves. It draws them together because they can interact through it.<sup>247</sup>

In Meiselas’ own images from the area, several of the situations documented show precisely how gathering around photographs functions as a way of acting out one’s belonging to a community. In one, a man who was a Peshmerga fighter in the 1963 rebellion in Northern Iraq holds up a photograph of himself and two other soldiers from the time of the insurrection.<sup>248</sup> (fig. 50) It is the former soldier himself who presents the image to the camera. Yet also visible is a group of men gathering around the picture, at once participating in the act of observing the image and also showing it to the camera. The photograph in question is both literally and metaphorically in the centre of the act, as the object around which

50) Susan Meiselas, *From the project Kurdistan*, 1998–2008. Courtesy of the artist



247. Olin, *Touching Photographs*, p. 133.

248. Peshmerga are the military forces of the region of Iraqi Kurdistan.



the veteran recalls his part in the historical events through which their particular sense of belonging is reinforced. Meiselas' photograph becomes a meta-picture of the acting out of a sense of community through photography. In other images, Meiselas documents the burials of Peshmerga martyrs, including the tradition common in many Muslim (and Orthodox Christian) cultures of wearing a small photograph of the deceased person at the funeral. In others, we see people gathering together and resting their hands around a photographic portrait on a gravestone. What they all have in common is that they are documentations (in themselves acts or engagements) of situations in which belonging is affectively and physically acted out in relation to photographs.

Returning to the online community, in addition to the storyline and comments section, the website also contains an "Unknown Image Archive", in which users are able to upload pictures about which they wish to know more. Other visitors are able to comment on the images, giving suggestions regarding who or what is depicted, who may have taken it, where and when. Each unattributed image contains a number of different suggestions and comments. One photograph shows a small group of young people, some dressed in Kurdish clothes. They stand in front of a banner reading: *Kurdish Students Society in Europe – KURDISTAN*. The comments below the image suggest – with what appears to be equal certitude – that the photograph was taken in Finland, Prague, England and Germany in the years 1962, 1961-66, 1970-75, and that it features a variety of differently named individuals. While it may at some point be possible to determine the facts around this photograph with a convincing amount of certainty, its function in this context is not first and foremost to serve as a testimony to the existence of the people in the photograph in a particular place and time. Rather, its primary purpose is as an element of interaction, around which ongoing contestations of this community, like any community, can take place.<sup>249</sup> In this way, the photographs are able to function, as Azoulay describes above, as a community beyond the power structures of the national states that govern the region; a borderless space in which Kurdistan as, literally, an "imagined commu-

249. In the comments section of the website, you find contestations of the general narratives of belonging of not just the Kurds but all the minorities of this geographical area, including the argument that it has been proven "in scientific studies that Kurdish's root is pro-Turkish and Kurds are a klan amongst 24 Turkish klans".

nity" can take shape and be challenged.<sup>250</sup> The images and stories are presented on the site as fragments rather than a completed cohesive history. It therefore gives encouragement to this kind of contestation, ensuring that it operates as any offline community: a living entity in a constant state of emergence.

## Conclusion

As Sara Ahmed pointed out above, embodied and affective senses of (non-) belonging are created, re-enforced, or dismantled through the ways in which we turn towards or away from objects. As such, relationships with photography can be perceived as reinforcing or reducing particular senses of belonging. This can be done passively (at times subconsciously) through accepting the images that surround us, or actively through sharing or "liking" images online or putting them on the walls of private or communal spaces. Equally, a sense of belonging can be reduced by the way we turn away from images, by criticising them verbally, deleting them from our screens, or simply (at times subconsciously) ignoring their existence. In this chapter, I have looked at how photographs function in different situations as acts within which different senses of belonging are made or unmade. I have explored further how, paradoxically, photographs can be understood both as a part of the wallpaper that form our perceptions of the world, and also as being able to open up or unfold new ways of perceiving. Throughout the chapter, I have continued to argue that the significance of all of these acts is less perceptible through a representative logic, and more effectively apparent through an ontological model, which takes them on precisely as affective and embodied acts. In the remaining two chapters, I direct attention to the role that materiality plays in these engagements. Furthermore, I investigate what an affective and embodied view on photography allows us to understand about cultural trauma and the possibility of engaging with such trauma in the present.

250. The term 'imagined communities' was coined by Benedict Anderson in 1983 to talk about the nation as an imagined political community. Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York; Verso, 2006).

*Part 3*

## **Materiality and Trauma**

## Material Belonging

*In which I explore the relationship between materiality and belonging. I do this through a number of photographic projects where the camera is directed toward the material spaces in which belonging is formed and experienced. I turn to Brian Massumi's reflections on materiality and movement, concepts such as the physical notion of entropy, as well as the Bergsonian idea of duration. With the help of these notions, I argue that a different view of materiality in relation to the question of belonging emerges in the works discussed; an understanding that exists beyond language and beyond the conceptual divisions between man and nature or culture and matter. In the analyses, I take a look at series by Serkan Taycan, Ignacio Evangelista, Vanessa Winship, the xurban\_collective, Jenny Rova, and Hendrik Zeitler.*

### Materiality and Movement

In *Parables of the Virtual* (2002), Brian Massumi describes an avoidance of the phenomena of movement and sensation in relation to discussions of the body and change in cultural theory in the two decades leading up to his own reflections.<sup>251</sup> The fear that led to this avoidance, according to Massumi, was that of falling into a reductive empiricism, or a “naïve realism” that would take as its focus the “presence of dumb matter” as an apparently unproblematic concern.<sup>252</sup>

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251. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*.

252. Ibid., p. 1.

Massumi describes the post-structuralist framework favoured by much of cultural theory until roughly the turn of the century as generally treating the body as a discursive entity positioned on a grid of signifying subjects. Even while focus is directed toward the multiple dimensions through which a subject is positioned, such as studies approached through intersectionality, the attention is nevertheless on the positioning of the subject on this grid. Movement, from this perspective, becomes reduced to being displaced along one or more axes, removing from the equation the potential for recognizing movement beyond displacement; i.e. the potential for transformation. Massumi points out how he recognizes “the very real insights” of poststructuralist cultural theory, particularly in terms of the relationship between culture and power. Nevertheless, his proposition is to part ways with the linguistic models underpinning this perspective and suggest instead engaging with “a semiotics willing to engage with continuity”.<sup>253</sup> Rather than identifying positions, Massumi suggests perceiving of space, or a cultural field (or whatever might be the object of perception), as continuous. The further purpose being then to direct attention to dimensions of reality that might otherwise remain imperceptible. As Massumi points out, it is not that one model is more or less true than the other, but rather that the alternative perspectives render perceivable different things. Focusing on measurable, divisible points on a grid hides the continuity of movement or the perception of space as a dynamic unity.

Significantly for this discussion, Massumi furthermore describes how this focus on points on a grid fails to allow matter, as such, to enter into the equation. That is to say, matter as a direct focus, rather than its mediation through signification. In response to this, Massumi writes that the aim of his own theoretical project is to “put matter unmediatedly back into cultural materialism, along with what seemed most corporeal back into the body”.<sup>254</sup> Paying attention to movement in relation to the body or materiality, however, means recognizing that there is also an incorporeal aspect to the body as a positioned thing; a mode of the body that is always in motion. Massumi compares this to the way that energy relates to matter, as “mutually convertible modes of the same reality”.<sup>255</sup>

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253. Ibid., p. 27.

254. Ibid., p. 4.

255. Ibid., p. 5.

In talking about such a “slip into an incorporeal materialism”, Massumi turns to Henri Bergson’s analysis of Zeno’s paradox of the flying arrow, in which the arrow is always in a particular position at a particular moment. Here the concept of infinity returns as a problem. This is because in between each position there are an infinite number of intervening points, each of which needs to be met before reaching the next point. Of course, however, the number of points being infinite, the arrow can never actually reach them and becomes (theoretically) immobilized.

The basis of the problem, then, lies in the very idea that movement can be divisible into positions. As Massumi puts it: “a path is not composed into positions. It is nondecomposable: a dynamic unity”.<sup>256</sup> It is here that Massumi writes of the Bergsonian revolution that turns the world on its head, by placing position as secondary to movement, rather than problematically trying to derive some kind of movement from a number of positions. Positions may momentarily appear as useful analytical references, but process is always primary and emergence is constant. Rather than focusing on structure and on the position of the body within this structure, the body, in its material and immaterial dimensions, becomes an event in constant emergence, but never fully formed, as a subject. Below, I go on to also connect this with the Bergsonian notion of *duration*, in which Bergson expands on the perspective through which we are able to pay attention precisely to this movement, rather than the analytical reference points that they are meant to describe. I also connect these ideas with the perception of materiality that comes across in the photographic works that I analyse.

Thus, focusing on the dimension of emergence allows us to forego the distinction between the individual and the collective in a given situation; not as a field that is ontogenetically pre-social, but as a relation, distinction or interaction which is precisely what takes form within this field of perception. It is from this perspective that Massumi is able to bring in the phenomena of belonging, which he then describes as “unmediated, and underway, never already-constituted. It is the openness of bodies to each other and to what they are not – the incorporeality of the event”.<sup>257</sup> Significantly, then, Bergson and Massumi in turn include the body and materiality in the field of emergence. The emergence of being is neither a material nor a social construction, but always and inevitably

256. Ibid., p. 6.

257. Ibid., p. 76.

both at the same time. Subjectivity and group formations are in a constant “relay between its corporal and incorporeal dimensions”.<sup>258</sup> Below, I go on to argue how the photographs in the series below have the potential to bring out precisely this aspect of the phenomena of belonging.

#### *Photographic materialities*

As I have described in previous chapters, during the last few years, photography theory has begun to move away from questions of representation and semiotic perspectives towards an increased focus on the medium’s materiality. Elisabeth Edwards, amongst others, has brought attention to the importance of taking into consideration the role that the materiality of the image plays within different social and cultural processes. She argues that:

our understanding of photographic representations is not merely a question of visual recognition or semiotic (*sic*) but that visual experiences are mediated through the material nature and material performances in the formats and presentations of visual images.<sup>259</sup>

The question of the materiality of the photograph, however, does not just concern the physical properties of the image itself or how it is presented in different material contexts. A linked, but rarely discussed aspect of this question concerns a view of materiality as it is revealed through the image, not as a representation but as an unmediated visceral experience.<sup>260</sup> Putting aside, as I have done throughout this discussion, the question of representation, what comes into

258. Ibid., p. 14.

259. Elisabeth Edwards, “Material Beings: Objecthood and Ethnographic Photographs”, *Visual Studies*, 17/1, 2002, p. 67.

260. One way of understanding such a non-representational approach to photography is Laura Marks’ idea of enfolding/unfolding. Rather than representing material spaces, certain contents of its experience are understood as “pulled up” or unfolded into the image. From this perspective, the question of correspondence, or whether the image more or less accurately represents something outside the image, becomes obsolete. Again, I refer to the web-based project “Enfolding and Unfolding: An Aesthetics for the Information Age” that Marks created together with Raegan Kelly to show how images unfold from “the thickness of experience” through, for example, the codes of the digital and then into the actualised image. Marks, “Enfolding and Unfolding: An Aesthetics for the Information Age”.



focus is what is affectively and viscerally revealed through the images about the material spaces within which belonging is acted out.

As mentioned, however, the materiality of the photographs themselves plays an important part in bringing out the materiality that appears through the images. Many of the images discussed in this section are taken with a large format camera and presented in large scale to be contemplated in either printed photography books or galleries, away from the inexhaustible flow of images and information that characterise so many aspects of globalised societies. The large format technology has the ability to reveal details and structures in the objects and spaces depicted, in a way that at times can go beyond the human eye's ability to notice these facets on their own. Both the scale and form of their presentation invites the perceiver to notice, and take the time to observe, the details of the images. Visual anthropologist Christopher Pinney writes about the camera's "inability to discriminate" between what should be in the picture and what should be left out.<sup>261</sup> He highlights how photographs inevitably include details and aspects of reality that the photographer did not intend, which inexorably leads to what he calls a "margin of excess" within the photograph. It is this that, for Pinney, also makes the historical and ethnographic images that he himself analyses open to reinterpretation and revaluation: "It is precisely photography's inability to discriminate, its inability to exclude, that makes it so textured and so fertile."<sup>262</sup> This indiscrimination not only opens up the picture to reinterpretation and revaluation, but also makes it possible to discern details and nuances of life that exist beyond subjective experiences. Those series using large format technology to highlight the material aspects of existence can be seen to reinforce the already inherent ability of the photograph to bring forth aspects of material existence that, without the necessary photographic technology, are likely to remain unseen by the naked eye.

Furthermore, several of the images below follow a now long-lived trend in contemporary photography in which the aim seems to be to reinforce further this ability of the large format technology. As curator and photography writer Charlotte Cotton describes in relation to what she calls *deadpan* photography:

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261. Christopher Pinney, "Introduction: 'How the Other Half...'", in Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson (eds.), *Photography's Other Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 6.

262. Ibid.

The emphasis, then, is on photography as a way of seeing beyond the limitations of individual perspective, a way of mapping the extents of the forces, invisible from a single human standpoint, that govern the man-made and natural world.<sup>263</sup>

The aesthetics of deadpan can be seen as a move away from the traditions of documentary photography and the stereotype of the photographer as a hunter (gatherer) of moments in the world to be caught and immortalized by the camera. A "found moment" seems to entail that a particular scene, which goes on independently of the photographer, is caught by a fortuitous camera angle, and would have passed by unseen if the photographer had not been there to "save" it. The *deadpan* aesthetics, in contrast, makes it seem as if the subject is there, in that particular place and time, first and foremost for the purpose of being photographed. In the work of forerunners such as Bernd and Hilla Becher and Rineke Dijkstra, industrial buildings and mothers who have just given birth are engaged with through the same detached point of view. Rather than some inner meaning that appears to become available through the moment of intimacy between camera and subject, it appears as if it is the material presence in the space in which they are placed that is of significance.

## Belonging and Entropy

In this part I look at two series that work with both large format technology and the aesthetics of deadpan as they take on the phenomena of belonging. In chapter four, I discussed Serkan Taycan's *Between Two Seas*. As I explained, this series is part of a larger photography project that documents rural, suburban and urban parts of Turkey, and some of the drastic changes that the country has undergone in the last decade. While *Between Two Seas* focuses on the changes taking place in peripheral Istanbul, the first series of the project, *Habitat* (2008), depicts people, objects, and landscapes of small-town and rural Turkey; areas in which the photographer himself lived as a child or teenager. According to Taycan, the series is the result of an investigation into the phenomena of belonging, or, more specifically, the experience of no longer feeling a sense of

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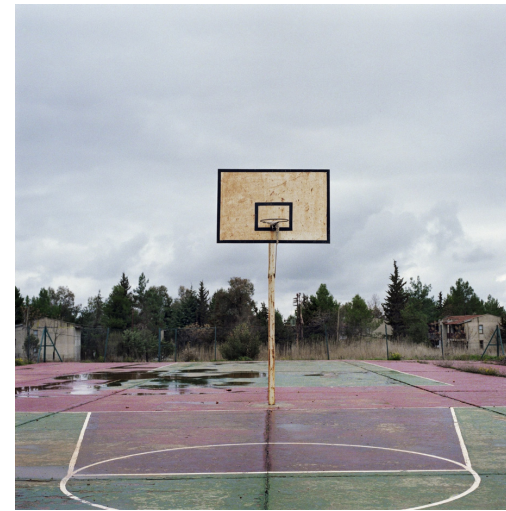
263. Charlotte Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* (London & New York: Thames & Hudson, 2009), p. 81.

belonging in relation to certain places and situations.<sup>264</sup> The series appears to take on the culturally available narratives of identity cognition, only to recognize how, on closer inspection, the stories start to crumble. In the meeting with the photographic rendition of the people, objects, and sites around which narratives of identification have been constructed, the stories break into a disarray of memories, associations, emotions and sensations that make up the embodied fantasies of belonging. Arjun Appadurai has claimed that the imagination, fed through media, has been given a new role in the (extended) present.<sup>265</sup> This novel position entails imagination no longer just being a faculty in the creation of art, myth, and legend, but as a key component in the daily life of individuals. The photographs in Taycan's series point to the material and embodied collateral of these imaginations; the sites at, objects with, and bodies through which the imagined stories are carried out in lived life. Images of, for example, human subjects, an old basketball hoop, a deserted telephone booth, a trampoline over an empty pool, or an abandoned car wreck are addressed as parts of a space in which (non-)belonging is acted out. The images seem to suggest that it is the land itself, with its organic and mineral objects and bodies, which holds the answer to the pressing question of what happens in the transition of no longer being a part of, or belonging to, a certain place.

The starting point of the *Habitat* series, then, is found in a very specific and personal experience of returning to places where the photographer lived as a child and teenager and experiencing the land and its people, objects, images, and events as at once familiar and foreign. This experience is tied to the singular sensations and memories of the photographer's relationship with the people and objects encountered, as well as with the lands that are revisited; the dry, rocky landscape around Kars near the Armenian border, the open fields surrounding the city of Muş, or the green mountains of Kastamonu near the Black Sea. As the photographer himself explains, the act of taking the photographs is a personal journey to the histories and contemporary complexities of the places visited and depicted. Below I return to the historical and common narratives to which the images relate. For now, I remain with the personal aspects, which can be seen to reside in the act of returning to places where the photographer

264. Conversation with the artist, March 2011.

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



once lived. In this act, Taycan directs the camera to those sites and objects that appear to speak of the paradoxical sensation of being profoundly familiar with a certain space and at the same time fundamentally estranged from it. The stillness of the windless courtyard with an old football left behind is brimming with associations, potential memories and affects. The empty swimming pool with the chipped paint and the basketball court with its absent net, however, are missing the living bodies that would give the objects and sites life. (fig. 51–52) These places used to be not only deeply familiar but also formative of sensations of self-perceived identity and belonging. They have maintained their familiarity but lost their formative powers in the present. Both literally and metaphorically, they have lost their life.

Rather than discursive narratives or subconscious desires, the photographs of the *Habitat* series seem to suggest that some kind of answer lies in the materiality of the objects/subjects; in the cracking white paint of the old trampoline that stands out with almost unreal clarity in the high density picture, in the patterns of the stones of the path, in the colour of a school uniform, the texture of a scarf, or in the dirt on the board of the basketball hoop or in its missing net. The perception of these spaces and objects, like the processes of memory

51–52) Serkan Taycan *Habitat*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist



itself, resonates in the physical body as well as in the mind. As such, the visual perception of chipping paint is also a sensation at one's fingertips, and the watery surface on the ageing rubber of the basketball court becomes the conduit of an olfactory sensation.<sup>266</sup> In the images, it is the materiality that is put into focus. The objects are isolated from their regular functions (or brought forth in their disuse), and human subjects are placed apart from any action that they would otherwise be performing. In this way, the series seems to suggest that the phenomenon that is being explored, not only in terms of the question of belonging and homeland, but the transition of no longer feeling connected to a certain situation or space, is above all about matter. As Bergson makes clear, matter is not static, but in a constant state of transformation. The steel of a car rusts and breaks down. The rubber of the basketball court starts to disintegrate, despite its being treated to be weather resistant. And the landscape as a whole is slowly transformed by a changing climate.

From rural Turkey, I now temporarily move beyond the external borderlands of Europe to its internal borders. In the series *After Schengen* (*European Borders*) (2014), Spanish photographer Ignacio Evangelista documents abandoned or rebuilt border crossings between European countries some decades after the Schengen Agreement was effectuated. In chapter three, I looked at how the Schengen Agreement led to increased control of Europe's external borders, as well as the dissolution of its internal ones. At the time of the artist's documentation, most of the border controls that Evangelista photographed had not been in use for around two decades, while a few had been converted and used for some other purpose. At those crossings that have been left to the forces of nature, the surrounding vegetation has begun to spread amongst and over the buildings. The metal has begun to rust and moss started to cover the cement walls. Information boards and warnings signs are just beginning the long process of being broken down by the weather. Until recently these official notices ruled in a very real way the movement of both bodies and minds across national and cultural boundaries.

266. For a further discussion (in the field of moving images), see Sobchack's *Carnal Vision* in which she discusses "ways in which the cinema uses our dominant sense of vision and hearing to speak comprehensibly to our other senses." Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 67.



53–54) Ignacio Evangelista, *After Schengen: European Borders*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist

In one of the pictures in Evangelista's series we see the border control at a minor road leading from or to a German-speaking area. (fig. 53) The red text on the sign, "Achtung Staatsgrenze", has begun to fade, and the sign is about to be hidden by the surrounding vegetation. Moss and other vegetation have begun to cover the brick tiles of the small house. As in the other images in the series, signs and text on the asphalt urging motorists to stop have both faded and lost their significance. These notices have been emptied of their import, a fact compounded by the incipient decay of the material constructions. They remain topical, however: as reminders of the impermanence of current efforts to protect the so-called European project against its "enemies". Shifting political priorities mean that the efforts and resources that once went into strengthening these territorial barriers have now migrated to other borders. What appears foremost in the photographs, however, is the extent to which this transformation is as much a material as a structural change. A decision to open a certain border or invest resources to strengthen another is settled in the moment. Yet the process by which these changes take shape bodily at physical locations equates to a slower transformation of matter. In stark detail, the photographs reveal how entropic processes come into play, dissolving the systems that were once created to stop people from moving across different borders.

In Taycan's as well as Evangelista's series, there is no division between social constructions and nature, between the discursive and material. In the photographic depiction these appear within the same dimension; one that, ultimately, is governed by nature's slower pace of transformation. I want to remain for a moment with the concept of entropy as it is an important component of what comes across in many of these and other images that work with a similar aesthetics and technology. In physics, entropy means a transition from a state of relative order to one of relative disorder. This occurs when an egg is cracked open or when someone jumps into a pool, causing a big splash. The natural tendency for things to degenerate into increasing disorder makes it impossible to un-break the egg or un-splash the water. On a larger scale, entropy is the process through which the universe is transformed from an extremely compact and compressed mass into matter and celestial bodies that are continuously distributed in increasing disarray around the universe. In both these micro and macro examples there is a ceaseless change from a state of low entropy to a state of high entropy. Certain human activities such as industry and various kinds of constructions serve to

temporarily decrease entropy in particular places and times. Nevertheless, on a wider scale, it increases constantly. When people's attention and efforts are moved from one area to another, what is left is for nature to resume its slow change towards maximum disorder. Often, the focus of attention follows the movement toward new structures and innovative attempts to order. The focus in Taycan's and Evangelista's series, however, is directed rather towards those structures that are left behind and which have slowly transformed from the temporary order that has been briefly imposed to the maximum disorder to which the universe is inexorably moving. When I refer to entropic processes in this discussion, I do not mean it as a metaphor, but precisely in the scientific sense of what ultimately happens to matter in the universe. Human constructions emerge as temporary and, within the temporality of the universe, constitute little more than momentary attempts to counter this process. The series of works by Taycan and Evangelista signal a discernible shift in perspective, namely one in which human efforts – and the discourses and structures that are used to explain them – feature as temporary deviations from the entropy that governs nature and the universe as a whole. In relation to this, belonging appears as a temporary and momentary order, fundamentally grounded in materiality.

### National Belonging and Beyond

It is instructive at this point to return once again to Taycan's series *Habitat*. As has already been mentioned, these photographs of the lands, their objects and people point beyond the personal to shared understandings of belonging. The most obvious symbol of commonality in the series is to perhaps be found in the insistent nationalism that returns in different guises in many of the photographs. For instance, in the star and crescent which are barely visible on a train window overlooking a cloudy landscape (fig. 55) or painted in white on a dry mountainside. Or in the national anthem printed above the blackboard of a classroom in Muş together with the obligatory photograph of the Turkish Republic's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and his address to Turkey's youth. Then there is the gold coloured bust of Atatürk beside one of the leader's oft quoted statements ("Happy is s/he who calls her/himself a Turk") (fig. 56) and a flag sleeping in a windless courtyard in Kastamonu. Across the world in the last decades, the idea of the national as shaping steadfast conceptions and





55–56) Serkan Taycan, *Habitat*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist

perceptions of belonging has been challenged on many fronts.<sup>267</sup> In Turkey, in the cultural climate of the post 1980s era, and most consequentially in the last decade, this transformation has been particularly marked. A new politics of liberalisation (turned authoritarian) and mediated supra-national communities of, for example, religion and ethnicity have been creating “communities of sentiment”, with imaginations and feelings strong enough to compete with the once dominant (at least in the public domain) idea of national belonging.<sup>268</sup> In the photographs of the *Habitat* series, however, national symbols are revealed as they exist beyond the articulations of nationalism. Rather than given the blame for populism, wars and violence, or embraced as the solution to all identity insecurities and other problems, these symbols come across as parts of the landscape or material environment, and as inseparable from both imagined fantasies and embodied sensations of (non-)belonging in relation to this space. Many of the

267. Including the movement of large numbers of people across national borders and the exponentially increasing speed at which images, texts, and ideas travel throughout the world via digital technologies.

268. The notion of “Community of Sentiment” was originally used by Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Gerth, Hans H. and Mills, C. Wright, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

symbols are easily overlooked at first glance, as they blend into the experience of looking out into the fleeting landscape. From this perspective, the articulations and politicisation of any position appear as equally urgent or artificial. They come across not as a result of deconstruction of the concepts at work in their expressions, but through affectually revealing them to be secondary to their embodied enactments.

In the late 1990s, anthropologist Yael Navaro carried out research and analysis into how the different political positions of the state in Turkey are embodied and enacted by civilians.<sup>269</sup> Following cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek, Navaro refers to the “fantasy” of the state, and focuses her attention on those aspects of political affiliation that exist as unconscious desire, and which therefore tend to survive analysis, critique or deconstruction. As Navaro explains, political affiliations are often re-produced through enactments of such fantasies by the very same people that criticise them. Directing attention towards the fantasy of the state, rather than the discourse that appears to contain it, allows us to study the “enduring force of the political”, as it lives in the imaginations of its subject.<sup>270</sup> Navaro points out that post-Foucauldian discussions of state power in the recent decades have tended to limit their focus to the “political in its seemingly rationalized institutional and discursive form.”<sup>271</sup> At the same time, post-Saidian criticisms of cultural identity have by and large been limited to an understanding of identity as a constructed concept, or a discursive process of subjectification. In these understandings, the visual, in particular photographs, tend to be evoked as representations through which identities are constructed. They are understood as signs at play in the processes of identification, leaving many other aspects of belonging beyond the reach of much of the identity criticism and deconstruction of the last decades. While Navaro’s Žizekian analysis confines this “fantasy” to a position within the psychic unconscious, however, I suggest that it needs to be traced in the multiple places in which it resides. This includes not only the unconscious of the psyche but also the bodies of human subjects, their material constructions, and all that is phenomenally synthesised between these entities before the reduction into a certain theory.

In one of the images from the *Habitat* series we see a young girl wearing

269. Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

270. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

271. *Ibid.*, p. 3.



57–58) Serkan Taycan, *Habitat*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist

a pink winter coat standing in the middle of a snowy street in Muş in central eastern Turkey. (fig. 57) In another image a boy of about the same age stands in a similar pose on a brick road in Amasya, in the mountains near the Black Sea. (fig. 58) Both examples make use of *deadpan* aesthetics to draw attention to the children's embodied presence in that particular time and place. According to the photographer, the images were made to contrast each other, their differences being intensified through their formal similarities.<sup>272</sup> The variations in the children's outfits, with the girl in a headscarf and a long skirt whilst the boy wears a slightly oversized suit with a tie, seem to speak of a dichotomy that is further enhanced by the contrast between the white coldness of a winter on the one hand and the green mildness of an early summer on the other. While they both belong to the geographical construction that is contemporary Turkey, they appear to embody a duality that is sometimes overstated, and often oversimplified, by writers and scholars of Turkey, but which nonetheless plays an intrinsic part in negotiations and experiences of belonging in the areas explored, both historically and in the contemporary setting. The dichotomy to which I refer concerns the rhetoric of the secular as opposed to the religious, which permeates

272. From a conversation with the artist, March 2011.

political discussions as well as personal narratives in terms of what ought to be the guiding light in Turkey's political and civil life.<sup>273</sup> What is debated in these constructed accounts is to a large extent a story of space, of the terrain that the storytellers inhabit as well as the meaning of that land. As Navaro found in her anthropological research, the narratives of belonging related to her were in one way or another situated. They told the histories of the land on which they lived. These pasts were constructed as a duality. One is a European story, emphasising their intrinsic connection with the Balkans and Greece, making the natural continuation of the story another chapter of secularity and modernity. The other is history as a tale of *Dar al-Islam*, the "abode of Islam", with the Ottoman Empire as inheritors of the early Muslim and Arabian empires – and with the Turkish Republic as the rightful heirs of this heritage. The role of the headscarf in these negotiations has been equally polarised and incorporated into constructed narratives of identity and authenticity, each claiming to represent a genuine sense of belonging to the land and its history. As Navaro explains, the very idea of genuine/false is made obsolete by recognising the extent to which the Islamists and secularists of her study acted and felt as if their conceived identity were genuine. The headscarf being the most charged symbol in this struggle over the true identity, Navaro's research points to the extent to which not only the rhetoric surrounding it but its manufacture, distribution, promotion, and use, is implicated in a recent history of consumption, as well in contemporary identity politics.

However, beginning not in the abstractions of political science or the narratives of history, but in the acts of seeing and taking the photographs, foregrounds the extent to which the land and material objects used as pawns in these debates are lived and felt in the practices of everyday life. While existing within the framework of the stories and strategies used in an intensely polarised debate on identity and belonging, this framework is always found incarnated in a particular situated act. The photographic meeting is a particularly poignant and relevant encounter, as it places at the centre embodied and situated vision as the experience from which understanding potentially grows and returns. In remaining with this experience, while taking detours into the surrounding discourse, understanding becomes what happens in the material world, in the

273. For a further discussion, see, for example, Nurdan Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window* (London & New York: Zed Books/Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

body of the perceiver and his/her actions, as s/he keeps looking and acting, rather than in the concepts referring to it.

Another series of photographs, named *Sweet Nothings* (2007), taken by British photographer Vanessa Winship, similarly deals with the ideas of borders and belonging in rural Turkey.<sup>274</sup> Here, however, the focus is on the borderlands of Eastern Anatolia, and all the images depict schoolgirls in their uniforms. In contrast with the *Habitat* series, the photographs of *Sweet Nothings* are black and white, and each picture is framed in a similar fashion, with one or two girls in the foreground taking up most of the frame. There is nothing casual in the depictions, but once again the aesthetics of deadpan is deployed to create a sense of the girls, not as caught in action, but as participants in a singular photographic act in which their embodied presence is at stake. The backgrounds – often showing stone walls or shrubs – is out of focus and appears mostly insignificant in relation to the intense presence of the subjects. In some of the images, however, we see the blurry outline of a dry, hilly landscape in the background or some small houses on a stony ground. Others show the classroom and include such details as the blackboard, some scattered letters of the alphabet, and the familiar image of Atatürk on the wall. This educational setting allied with the embroidered collars of the school uniforms speak of a familiar idea, namely an attempt to construct a common story of national belonging in a space where other stories have often been, and still are, told.

The photographs may well prompt some viewers to find out more about the circumstances in which they were taken. Yet the images themselves tell nothing of the stories, processes and relationships that underlie a particular situation. Nevertheless, as I have made clear on numerous occasions throughout this discussion, what may be described as the *discursive poverty* of the photograph is connected to its ability to reveal those aspects of belonging that do not fit into an articulated or politicised story. In *Sweet Nothings*, the congruities of articulated narratives of belonging are belied by the complexities of the visual information presented, the materiality as well as the sensuous and the emotive in the acts. The similarities of the format and the uniforms seem to be disproven by the

274. The series was published as a book with the same title, which also includes a text by the photographer and Max Houghton: Vanessa Winship and Max Houghton, *Sweet Nothings* (Marseille: Images en Manœuvres Éditions, 2009).



expressiveness of the different gazes of the girls, as well as their distinct demeanours. This expressiveness is, in turn, contrasted by the roughness of a stone floor in a classroom or the dryness of a rocky landscape. Furthermore, what eludes any coherent articulation are the different intentions of the subjects who fill the frame of the images: a hand squeezes the arm of a friend or a sister; a limb wraps protectively over another to show that they belong together. Other aspects fail to fit into any of these stories: the desire to be seen; the projection of one's dreams caught in the momentary attention of the camera lens; or simply the feel of an ill-fitting uniform with a tight collar. In one image, two girls, who might well be sisters given their very similar appearance, clutch each other tightly. (fig. 60) The background is a plain grey wall and the girls' dresses are exactly alike. Both girls have pale eyes and look back at the camera with a steadfast gaze that pierces the perceiver. The directness in their stare seems to contest any attempt by the viewer to objectify them as belonging to one particular identity or another.

59–60) Vanessa Winship, *Sweet nothings*, 2007. Courtesy of the artist



At the same time, however, it is important to remember the multiplicity of spaces in which these and other photographs function. It is necessary to recognise the extent to which these children are presented in black in white, wearing ill-fitting dresses and often adopt awkward poses. All this makes them vulnerable to be consumed in terms of a different kind of ethics. The images in one context and from a certain position are able to reveal the complexities of embodied belongings. Yet in changed circumstances it becomes possible for the seeming Otherness of the subjects to be foregrounded.<sup>275</sup> In fact, as I have pointed out with the help of Ariella Azoulay in previous chapters, since the advent of photography, the more common position vis-à-vis the medium has been one in which the subjects or objects depicted have been encountered as representations of entities found “outside” the images. This is a position from which the subjects are easily locked into a position of representing, for example, the “internal” Other of Turkey or the “external” Other of Europe. The risk of “othering” is furthermore enhanced by the formal aspects mentioned above. Removed from the situation in which they were taken, the girls’ worn dresses and awkwardness risk being left to the mercy of viewers who are likely to construct the subjects as inherently Other, or as “empty signifier(s) of the exotic and of affliction.”<sup>276</sup>

While both Taycan’s and Winship’s series include clear references to symbols and narratives of common understandings of belonging, what they nevertheless most poignantly bring to attention is the lived, embodied and situated experience of these ideas before they are synthesised into particular stories. As I will continue to explore further, in these and arguably many other photography series, the bulk of existence is revealed as taking place in the not-yet narrativised infinity of carnal and material being. Or, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, “the world is not what I think but what I live through.”<sup>277</sup>

275. Stuart Hall writes about the “spectacle of otherness” as a way of describing difference emphasised in representations of particular identities. He describes how visual representations hold particular cultural authority in relation to this. To this I add photographs’ particular power to emphasise a yet more convincing experience of difference due to their visceral and affective powers. Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London & Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997).

276. Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography*, p. 402.

277. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London & New York: Routledge, 1962), p. xviii.

### *Materiality and globalisation*

In the next work to be analysed, the focus on materiality remains, but this time it is considered in relation to processes of globalised trade. The piece *La Ville Blanc* (2010) by the Turkish artist group the xurban\_collective, is part of a longer investigation into the sea as a material and symbolic manifestation of global commerce, economy, and the flow of bodies.<sup>278</sup> Port cities, such as Marseille, Istanbul, New York, Buenos Aires, and Bangkok are all the more significant from this perspective, as spaces in which people and goods from many different localities and cultures intermingle and cross paths. *La Ville Blanc* looks at Marseille in France and contrasts commercial images that can be seen to create experiences of non-belonging with photographs of the material situatedness of the trade that takes place in the same area. Speaking of movements of globalisation, Mike Crang and others have recognised how, in literature on the subject, information, images, ideas and even material goods are often seen as somehow “circulating”, rather than coming from and going to some particular place.<sup>279</sup> The piece *La Ville Blanc* engages with one particularly poignant space that material goods arrive to and are being shipped from, but which is at the same time a place of living and working, for humans and non-humans alike. This is also a space for movement and interaction between these and the inorganic material of the land and sea.

Part of the piece shows pixelated close-up photographs of the architectural rendering of a development project to be realised in the centre of Marseille. (fig. 61) The photographs covering the walls around the construction site are assembled from stock images to create a simulacrum of the non-situated people and objects that are generated to populate the standardised architecture of the gated communities, shopping malls, and office spaces of the global city. It is across these constructed images that somebody scribbled the grammatically incorrect title of the piece, the mistake suggesting that it was written by somebody without perfect proficiency in the language, and likely to be positioned outside the imaginary space of the architectural rendering.<sup>280</sup> The artists stress that the significance of bringing attention to these images and the misspelled

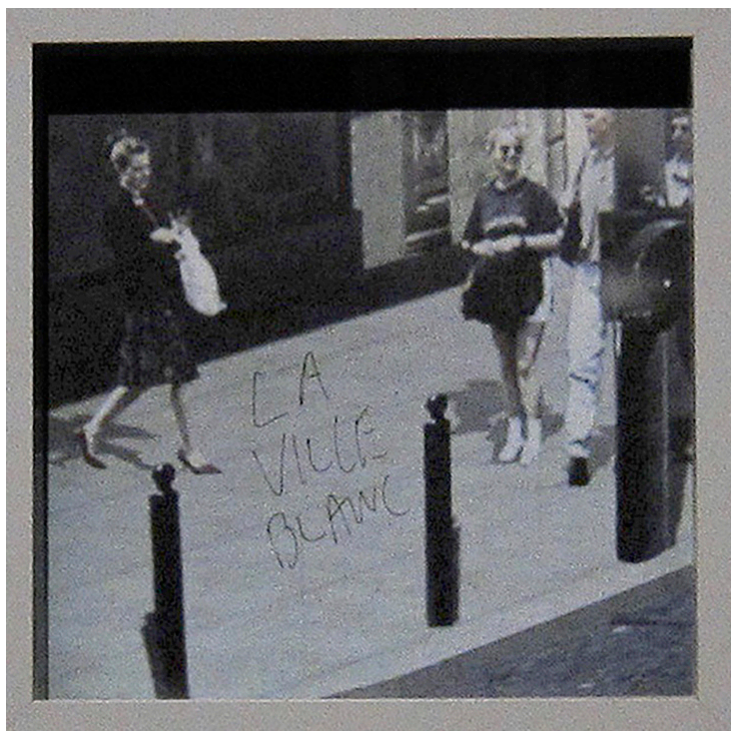
278. See xurban\_collective, “The Sea-Image, Visual Manifestations of Port Cities and Global Waters”, <<http://xurban.net/scope/theseaimage/>>, accessed 2 May 2011.

279. Mike Crang, “Globalization and Conceived, Perceived and Lived Spaces”, *Theory, Culture, Society*, 16/166, 1999.

280. The title *La Ville Blanc* means “the white city” but is grammatically incorrect.



61) xurban\_  
collective (Güven  
İncirlioğlu & Hakan  
Topal, 2000–12), *La  
Ville Blanc / Die  
Weisser Stadt*, 2010.  
Courtesy of the artist



protest scribbled on them is not to make a straightforward ethno-racial claim about the neo-liberal imaginations evident in these images. That said, however, they maintain the importance of recognising the extent to which these factors overlap in visualisations and materialisations of these spaces.<sup>281</sup> Rather, the aim is to bring attention to the often-overlooked efficiency of the exclusions maintained and re-enforced by visible and invisible neo-liberal imaginings of space. More effective than overt xenophobia, these constructs are able to exclude the poor, the immigrants and anyone else who is unable to participate in these imagined and actual spaces by simply rendering them invisible within these spatial

281. The artists themselves explore this further on xurban\_collective, "La Ville Blanc, Die Weisser Stadt", <<http://xurban.net/scope/lavilleblanc/>>, accessed 11 August 2011

promises of the future. Returning to Laura Marks, the question becomes what information is privileged, or, more importantly, passed over in these renditions, and what are the power factors that make this kind of (in)visibility possible. As Marks puts it, the media of our information age "tend to reiterate and reinforce certain paths with a terrible, clichéd, controlling sameness".<sup>282</sup>

The majority of the photographs of *La Ville Blanc*, however, are not made up of the simulacral constructions of stock images, but use the camera to explore the situated space of the harbour area. The images reveal the space at which the land and the sea meet. Here the riches of the sea and other parts of the world are brought in to be sold, re-organised or just passed on to continue their journey by other means. The camera is able to bring attention to the material situatedness of this endless motion through hundreds of photographs and long video shots of the endless motions of the sky, the sea, the coastline, the harbour space with its numerous containers waiting to be shipped off, and the enormous amounts of fish caught at sea and brought to the harbour every day. (fig. 62) In contrast to the photographs of the architectural renderings, which seem to fix a certain



62) xurban\_  
collective (Güven  
İncirlioğlu & Hakan  
Topal, 2000–12), *La  
Ville Blanc / Die  
Weisser Stadt*,  
2010. Courtesy of the  
artists

282. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity*, p. 19.

easily recognisable visual pattern that is at work throughout globalised space, the sea and harbour images unfold aspects of the situated, material space that it engages with, which otherwise would have remained enfolded and unreachable. The shapes and hues of the passing clouds, and the seemingly endless delivery of fish are revealed in their particular shininess, sliminess, brightness or dullness. The shore itself with its rocks and pebbles is brought out to be seen and felt in relation to its eternal meeting and separation from the sea. The photographs of this part of *La Ville Blanc* also reveal a sensuous meeting with these non-human participants in the patterns that form the flow of goods across the earth.

Mieke Bal discusses a practice of art-making that addresses globalisation, as she expresses, as a *problematic*.<sup>283</sup> As we saw in chapter three, Bal develops the notion of migratory aesthetics as an aesthetics that takes on this problematic as “a condition of sentient engagement”.<sup>284</sup> This can also be related to Jill Bennett’s idea of the potential of certain images or artworks to open up what she calls “affectively charged spaces”, in which aspects of emotionally and politically loaded situations can be affectively experienced and shared.<sup>285</sup> As we have seen, this way of perceiving the image or the artwork has little to do with the old “communicational” model in which the work is seen as a transmitter of content. Bennett describes how, while the recognition of content – such as particular events, places or objects – participates in the perception of these works, this function is made secondary to “an embodied perception or an affective register”.<sup>286</sup> Moreover, Bennett makes a connection to the way that postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak deliberates on the necessity of listening when describing the space of the encounter. The ability of speaking, for Spivak, counts for nothing without the possibility of being heard, which relies entirely on “the listener’s willingness to enter into such an encounter with another”.<sup>287</sup> Suggesting the possibility of a mode of “ethical listening” (and, I would add, seeing), Spivak argues against the reaction of either repudiating or assimilating into one’s own experience what is encountered. Instead Spivak, as well as Bennett, sees the recognition of dif-

283. Problematic is here used as a noun and as such describes a situation or issue that is not defined or settled or open to ongoing questioning. See Bal, “Lost in Space, Lost in the Library”, p. 26.

284. Ibid., p. 23.

285. See Bennett, *Empathic Vision*.

286. Ibid., p. 151.

287. Ibid., p. 105.

ference as an act of empathy, in which the listener/perceiver/feeler does not project what s/he already knows onto the encounter, but actively and affectively engages with the meeting as one actor amongst many, out of which none has the ultimate privilege to interpret the situation in one particular way. In *La Ville Blanc*, the artists express how they “believe that any statements made within the new global order should adequately represent the ‘negligibly small’ actors in the creation of wealth, including the earth, the sea and all living things”.<sup>288</sup> Included in the category of the “negligibly small” are animals and mineral participants as well as human actors. These are not normally given the space to speak and be heard. Their inclusion opens up an affectively charged space in which they can be empathically perceived. When perceived in this way, photography is also able to reveal realities as they exist at the sub- and supra-individual level. This perspective makes it possible to see the photographs not just as an encounter with other subjective experiences of globalised movements and spaces, but as a possibility of engaging with material space itself and of temporarily taking on the perceiving role in relation to these spaces. As Marks describes in relation to things, space itself has “more to tell people than most people have time to hear”.<sup>289</sup>

#### *Materiality and duration*

In what remains of this chapter I again turn the gaze northwards and look at two series by photographers/artists who direct their cameras toward the material spaces in which belonging is experienced and negotiated. Firstly, I look at a series by Swedish photographer Jenny Rova called *Homeland* (2011). This consists largely of snow-clad scenes and landscapes in the area of Uppsala, where the artist grew up. Through winter-barren vegetation we see a pixelated figure, apparently a child, stretched out in the snow with another figure standing at his or her feet. (fig. 63) Another image is taken from above, perhaps from a window. It shows a child sitting alone in a sand-filled playground. The view is partially obstructed by some object covering part of the lens, as if the photographer is spying on the activity below from some hidden place above. In another image we see a peach-coloured building, of the kind often found in Swedish residential areas, between some birch trees. A pale white winter light radiates through the trees onto the wall of the building. Like in Taycan’s *Habitat*, the series looks at

288. xurban\_collective, “La Ville Blanc, Die Weisser Stadt”.

289. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity*, p. 28.



63–64) Jenny Rova,  
*Homeland*, 2011.  
 Courtesy of the artist



places where the photographer once lived. It too explores the process through which things that used to be normal become foreign. Spaces in which the artist once felt she belonged are now looked at from the outside in, reaching through the camera toward the landscape, objects, and people that she sees. However,

while the images in Taycan's series are sharp and rich in detail, Rova's images are taken with a 300 mm zoom lens and are often blurry or partly blurry; in some the vision is partially blocked, as if the photographer indeed does not have (or no longer has) direct access to the spaces that she documents. The blurriness makes it seem as if her sight has been partly closed off by her absence from these places, objects, and people. Time has not only changed the places that she documents: it has also altered the photographer and her vision. The result is a disconnection between the spaces and the perceiver expressed through the partial obscurity of the images.

Despite being occasionally blurry and obscured, what these images highlight is the material qualities of the spaces to which Rova directs her camera: the texture of the stems of the birch tree in winter, for instance, or the particular hue of the residential building and the patterns of the tree shadows along its sidewall. In another image we see a road snaking up a hill between piles of snow and pine trees on the sides. (fig. 64) The dark night is lit by several roadside lights that shine down on the road and its surroundings from tall lampposts sticking out from the snow piles. The image, which is partially pixelated, struggles to make the most of the scant illumination. All the same, it is the obscurity of this particular light and the specific colours that are brought out in the objects onto which it falls that is brought to attention though the image. Long absence has rendered foreign those aspects of scenery, light and colour that were once were so familiar.

Unlike Taycan, Rova does not allude to national symbols or other such references to anchor the phenomena explored within a particular political context. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the symbols of Taycan's series resonate affectively on the same level as the material details of the images, hues and textures and their affective reverberations. In an analogous fashion, the materiality of Rova's series does not exist beyond a discursive framework of national or other kinds of politically determined belongings. In contrast, the trees, the textures, the light, the colours, the shades, and the shapes play significant roles in understandings of belonging that are normally verbalised through discursive narratives, but which in their situated and incarnated lived version find most (if not all) of their existence in the affective and visceral resonances of a material reality. What becomes apparent through these images is the extent to which the transformations between belonging and non-belonging (or any stages in between) take place betwixt the physical and affective body and its lived environment. With

particular potency, the photographs in Taycan's and Rova's series draw out this dimension such that it can be seen and felt.

It is instructive at this point to turn to another Swedish photographer who also explores the phenomena of belonging but in a different part of Sweden. Hendrik Zeitler documents the area of Angered in the suburbs of Gothenburg, where he grew up and still lives. A number of series that all relate to this area have been exhibited and published in a collected volume entitled *424* (2014).<sup>290</sup> A text in that publication notes that Angered has attained a degree of notoriety among Swedes. It is one of a handful of large city suburbs associated with social problems that are assumed to be connected to their large migrant populations. The title *424* is taken from the first three digits of the area postcode. It is also the term that many young people from the area use to refer to their own neighbourhood. The book includes a number of images of places where people have written the number 424 on walls, lamp posts, fences, or large rocks. Indeed, one image shows the number tattooed behind the ears of a female resident.

Being the result of the photographer's own experience of living in the area, however, the series sidesteps the stigmatisation and the common associations. People are purposefully absent in the pictures. The series thus avoids being a representation of the inhabitants of the area. Instead, it becomes at once a more personal exploration of the photographer's relationship with the spaces and objects depicted, and an investigation of the materiality of lived spaces in general. Without people in focus, the scenes and objects depicted become more than just backdrops, but appear in the foreground as inherently significant in terms of the phenomena that they explore. The images in the series have been taken over a period of many years of living within, walking around, and observing the spaces depicted. The choice of using large format technology exacerbated the time it took to shoot the photographs. The photographer describes how he would often return with his photographic equipment to a place in the area where he experienced a particular object or scene, hoping that it would still be there, and that he would stay as long as it would take to catch the image through the laborious process of large format photography.<sup>291</sup> Through the technology, the

290. Hendrik Zeitler, *424: Images from Hammarkullen Angered 2008–14* (Stockholm: Journal, 2014).

291. From a conversation with the photographer, November 2015. The process of using large format photography is time consuming for a number of reasons. The equipment is bulky and

images reveal the minute details and structures of the objects and spaces depicted; features that become yet further apparent when enlarged and presented on the gallery wall. In addition to the multiple appearances of "424", all the images of the series include nature in some form. Zeitler himself describes the closeness to nature as a common but often overlooked aspect of Angered and many other Million Programme areas.

The series *The Hills are Alive* (created between 2008 and 2014) forms part of *424*. It sees Zeitler direct the camera to spaces in the area where he lives as well as those traces left by other people living in, or in some way engaging with, the natural environment around the neighbourhood. Most of the images show temporary constructions in natural settings. Some of them look like they have been made by children playing whilst others appear to have been constructed by people seeking shelter from the elements. We see partly finished, or partly torn down, tree houses, improvised tents made from sticks and branches, what looks like a somewhat new and recently put up tent with a suitcase next to it, and a shelter made from a tarpaulin cover and plastic bags. (fig. 65) The last of these contains old mattresses and blankets, suggestive of the fact that it has been in use for an extended period. Other images show objects left behind from some kind of activity. These include a plastic chair on top of a panoramic hill; a knotted rope tied between two trees; stools made from logs set around a campfire; a tree swing; planks nailed to a tree to form a makeshift climbing frame; and a plastic bottle hanging from a tree on a piece of string. (fig. 66) Other images reveal no left behind objects, yet even here the manipulation of nature are evident – as, for example, in two saplings interwoven to make a leafy gate along a walking path. What all this visual material has in common is the absence of the people who have left their mark. Instead, we see the environment and objects within and through which they act. The high-resolution images bring out these milieus with particular conspicuousness, and reveal the extent to which these acts – like all such activities – are carried out in relation to the material world. The images bring out the idea that belonging and non-belonging are acts that are carried out in relation to the material environment not as a concept, but as a visceral and affective experience.

must normally be mounted on a tripod. Large sheets of negative photo paper are required for the process. Because it is open at the rear, a drape is often used to cover one's head and the camera for better viewing. In addition, the processing of the film is time-consuming.





65–66) Hendrik  
Zeitler, *The Hills  
are Alive*, 424 Ham-  
markullen, 2008–2014.  
Courtesy of the artist

One way of understanding the perception of matter that appears through many of these images is to turn to another of Bergson's ideas, namely the theory of the contemplative state beyond language that he calls *duration*.<sup>292</sup> Bergson claims that there is an alternative way to relate to the outside world, which often remains hidden under already formed concepts of what is experienced. Furthermore, he draws out precisely the experience of matter as a fundamental part of

292. Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2001).



this perception. From a generalising perspective typical of his time and field, Bergson suggests that human consciousness separates itself from its surroundings through only experiencing materiality in quantitative terms, or through already formed concepts. Via the theory of duration, the aim is to open up the possibility of a more direct experience of matter itself. According to Bergson, the state that he calls duration allows human subjectivity to be partially set aside such that materiality can be given more of an opportunity to communicate. Bergson writes here about the possibility of a more direct communication that would otherwise remain hidden beneath language and the structures of



consciousness. The inner life of man and nature alike does not consist of some kind of unified multiplicity, but precisely what Bergson refers to as duration.

Furthermore, the goal of the theory of duration is to move away from the dichotomy between object and subject. Above, I wrote about how entropy dissolves this seemingly irreconcilable difference, resulting in a levelling of the distinctions that insist on placing the two phenomena in opposition. Similarly, the theory of duration dissolves the determinism between man and nature. In the contemplative state beyond language that Bergson understands as duration, reality (including both human constructions and materiality) is revealed as a state of constant becoming. It may be seen as a paradox that the becoming of matter appears in the meeting with the still photograph. At the same time, it is precisely because of its tranquillity, both in what is depicted and its presentation, that duration is made possible. It is there in silence for the viewer to contemplate and experience as an event in the present; an event where the viewer has an important role to play as part of a non-verbal communication.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at a number of works that direct the camera toward the material spaces in which belonging is negotiated and experienced. I introduced a series by Serkan Taycan in which the artist explores personal and common experiences of (non)belonging in rural and small town Turkey as well as works by Vanessa Winship which deal with the theme of belonging along Turkey's borderlines. Subsequently I looked at two photographers – Hendrik Zeitler and Jenny Rova – who similarly explore personal and common belongings in different parts of Sweden. I also temporarily left the peripheries of Europe to explore the transformation of European understandings of belonging, through the changing inner borders of Europe to which Ignacio Evangelista directs his camera. Finally, I took a closer look at experiences of non-belonging and the materiality of globalised trade in the port city of Marseille. Throughout the chapter, I have argued that the photographs reveal how it is fundamentally through materiality that the phenomenon of belonging is formed and experienced.

I have argued that what appears is the possibility of a shift in perspective

towards materiality, which parallels that which Maurice Merleau-Ponty tries to bring about when he points out how

we shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body, and in so far as we perceive the world through our body.<sup>293</sup>

Like Merleau-Ponty, the photographs in this section remind us that we are phenomenological beings who experience the world through our physical bodies. As I have made clear on several occasions, this aspect on the physicality and materiality of how we experience the world is often overlooked in discourse-oriented explanations of how belongings are constructed or deconstructed. Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty points out, there are no phenomena, emotions or even concepts that are separate from the body that experiences them or from the material surroundings within which they are experienced. Also, in terms of the experience of the images in question in this chapter, as elsewhere, it is always and inevitably physical bodies that see, understand and feel what is at play. In the following chapter, materiality continues to play an important part in a discussion about how certain photographic works are able to provide a way into material and embodied understandings of trauma.

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293. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. p. 239.

## Engaging with Trauma

*In which I take a look at how certain practices within contemporary photography relate to violent events in history and the question of cultural trauma. In the chapter, consideration is given to perspectives from the field of trauma theory and their relevance to this material. I discuss the phenomenon of so-called aftermath aesthetics, the question of the (im)possibility of representing trauma, as well as Jelal Toufic's idea of surpassing disaster in relation to cultural trauma. I also return to Laura Marks' concepts, discussed in chapter one, of information and image in relation to the process of unfolding. The practices of Katarina Pirak Sikku and Serkan Taycan are re-examined in association with other work tackling violent events in the former Ottoman lands, including the civil war in Lebanon and the bloody aftermath of the Second World War in Israel and Palestine.*

### Trauma Theory

To begin this chapter, I bring up some voices in the field of trauma studies, as well as one notable criticism of certain trends within this field. The purpose is to show how aspects of trauma theory can be useful in approaching the relationship between works of contemporary photography and traumatic events of history. One of the most influential scholars in the field, trauma theorist Cathy Caruth, relies, like many others, on psychoanalytical metaphors in her

writings.<sup>294</sup> Caruth uses Sigmund Freud's theory of trauma from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and, like Freud, turns to literature to describe traumatic experience. She describes how literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing, and the particular point at which these two states intersect. There is a possibility, she paradoxically suggests, of reaching that which has no language – the traumatic experience – through language. Another significant voice on trauma is the philosopher and psychotherapist Pierre Janet. He contrasts the processing of memory and trauma by arguing that, while regular memory can easily transform itself into representation, traumatic or extreme affective experiences resist such processing.<sup>295</sup> Because of its unfamiliarity, the cognitive system is unable to deal with it. Similarly, psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk begins with Janet's description of traumatic experience in his writings, arguing that traumatic memory is of a “non-declarative” type, involving processes found outside verbal-semantic-linguistic representation.<sup>296</sup> What all these theorists have in common is a view of trauma as existing beyond the reach of conceptual ideas and representation, but where language also has the power to break down the mechanisms that disallow traumatic events from being processed. Van Der Kolk, however, begins to step away from the focus on language toward healing processes that take into account the effect of trauma on the entire human organism, including the physical body and senses.

While maintaining the concept of traumatic experience as resisting cognitive processing and remaining beyond the reach of verbal or semantic representation, other recent voices on trauma can be seen as moving away from psychoanalysis as the grounding perspective. For example, an article by Tom O'Connor explores how traumatic experiences are variously worked through in two independent movies using fantasy. He promotes Gilles Deleuze's theory of *becoming-art* as a more useful theoretical tool than Freudian or Lacanian psychoanalysis. In

294. See, for example, Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

295. Ruth Leys, “Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory”, *Critical Inquiry*, 20/4, 1994, pp. 623–662.

296. Bessel A. Van Der Kolk, “The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress”, *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 1/5, 1994, pp. 253–265.

relation to taking on, as well as potentially overcoming, traumatic experiences, he argues that Deleuze's theory presents a more empowered view of the forces at stake in these experiences. Rather than the psychoanalytical concepts of "sublimation, catharsis, and testimonial resolution," O'Connor advocates what he describes as the "consciousness-transforming, problem solving" operation of Deleuze's *becoming-art*.<sup>297</sup> O'Connor describes how imaginary productions participate in ongoing creative becoming, involving the potential for healing, but without offering the "false solution of a once-and-for-all catharsis" of psychoanalytic theory.<sup>298</sup> What is interesting in this criticism is that it replaces the psychoanalytic illusion of a *return* to something, whether this is understood as "normalcy" or one's pre-trauma identity, with a language of *becoming*, which is never-ending. From this perspective, existence is itself non-ideal or imperfect in its nature, and healing cannot be understood in idealised terms.<sup>299</sup>

As I have discussed previously, moving away from "representational truth" is one of the foremost aims of Jill Bennett's writing on trauma and its relation to, and expression in, contemporary art. In her Deleuzian perspective, there is no representational truth through which a traumatic experience can be presented or analysed. Rather, according to Bennett, art that effectively deals with trauma does so by presenting the sense memory or trauma, presenting it as an affective experience rather than an idea or concept. In chapter one, I described a similar

297. Tom O'Connor, "Trauma and Becoming-Art in Gregg Araki's *Mysterious Skin* and Asia Argento's *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things*," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 21/1, 03/2010, p. 72.

298. Ibid.

299. In their critique of psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe it as "the discovery of such and such a code", rather than the ongoing creativity within the immanent field of possibilities. They talk about how the concepts of psychoanalysis can be seen as abstract universals out of reach of the human subject, who has no power to transform them as they pre-determine the individual subject. In this way, the illusions and deformations created by the unconscious can be de-coded by a "predetermined, representational logic" and the concepts of psychoanalysis offer the master code to all possible representations. The limitations of psychoanalysis can then be understood in terms of limiting the complexity and difference that describes the human subject to a representational logic to be deciphered. Human desire, found at the centre of Freudian psychoanalysis as well as the Deleuzian theory of becoming, is in the latter conceived of as a potential for ongoing creative production and becoming, rather than something to be overcome, as a lack, as in the psychoanalytical desire for the illusion. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking Press, 1977).

perspective on the sense memory of trauma in the work of Charlotte Delbo. She, as mentioned, makes a distinction between common memory and deep memory when writing about her own experience of the concentration camps. Common memory, according to Delbo, normalises the painful, the horrific and the unacceptable, as an external memory that resides in the intellect, in and through language. Deep memory, in contrast, is described as a sensory faculty, "an organic tissue" which "literally embeds the traces of the camp in the body and its sense organs".<sup>300</sup> Common memory places events in a temporal framework, with a present and a past that is spoken of in the present, and a clear distinction between the two. Deep memory resides in a perpetual present. Therefore, it is through common memory that one is able to create narratives that describe the past as linear and historical. Evoking deep memory, on the other hand, is described as a kind of sensory recall, where the emotional and sensory details of particular events are sensed by the body.

I raise these notions concerning trauma in order to establish a connection between the idea of traumatic experiences resisting cognitive processing and the possibility of certain works of photography opening up affective and embodied understandings of particularly charged historical events. As I have touched upon previously, Bennett's reflections on trauma identifies the kind of art that can be said to deal with what she refers to as "affectively charged space".<sup>301</sup> As mentioned, Bennett uses these terms to describe spaces in which aspects of emotionally and politically loaded situations can be affectively experienced and shared. Once again, the focus lies not on the representative possibilities of these works in relation to these spaces, but on precisely what they are able to bring out in relationship to the affective negotiations that take place around certain events. For Bennett, furthermore, trauma is never understood as just subjective or objective, but as always taking place in the spaces between subjects and objects. In the previous chapter, I raised the notion of materiality as a significant aspect of such negotiations. In Bennett's words, trauma is always "lived and negotiated at an intersection", or as an in between.<sup>302</sup> She talks about the kind of art that brings attention to the affective experience of these negotiations,

300. As described by Heidi Grunebaum and Yazir Henri, "Re-Membering Bodies, Producing Histories", in Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (eds.), *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 107.

301. Bennett, *Empathic Vision*.

302. Ibid., p. 12.



and which stays with this experience within the field of the senses, rather than removing it to the realm of analysis. Works such as these, according to Bennett, move our connection of trauma “beyond the realm of the interior subject into that of inhabited place, rendering it a political phenomenon”.<sup>303</sup> Significantly for this discussion, Bennett, unlike the theorists cited above, describes vision as having a particular relationship to affective experience. Similarly to the kind of sensory recall to which Delbo refers, Bennett talks of “experience that cannot be spoken as it is felt”, and how vision in particular has the ability to bring our attention to the spaces within and processes through which such unspoken affective negotiations are acted out.<sup>304</sup> While maintaining this acting out as a political phenomenon, its significance lies not in the recognition of particular references to the past, but precisely in the affective and embodied experience in the present. As I have argued throughout this book, and will continue to elaborate on below, rather than representations of particular events, the strength of many photographic works lies precisely in bringing attention to these spaces in which unspoken affective negotiations are acted out.

Before moving on, I want to remain for a moment with the risks involved in using theories – Deleuzian-inspired or not – that in some way bring in the notion of affect in relation to traumatic events, and in particular in relation to traumatic events of common cultural and historical significance. Art historian Grant Kester argues against the counter-discursive orientation of Deleuzian ontology, which, according to Kester, involves “an almost total collapse of specificity and attention to context”.<sup>305</sup> What Kester and others are critical of is the elusive nature of affective and embodied experience, and perhaps in particular the kind of language that tries to identify this experience. The criticism points to the risk involved when moving away from the particular political and historical facts underlying a situation, into an altogether subjective realm of sensations and feelings. When directing attention to embodied and affective experience, such criticisms constitute important reminders not to lose sight of the situated political and historical particularities of a situation. As in all my previous discussions, however, the aim here is not to reach some kind of pure affective

303. Ibid., p. 151.

304. Ibid., p. 35.

305. Grant Kester, “Not Going with the Flow: The Politics of Deleuzian Aesthetics”, in Amitava Kumar (ed.), *Poetics/Politics: Radical Aesthetics for the Classroom* (1999), p. 28.

space untainted by conceptual understanding. As I have mentioned before, this is simply not possible, as affective experience and conceptual understanding are always and necessarily intertwined and dependent on each other. The aim, rather, is to pay attention to the continuous interplay between the affective and embodied qualities, on the one hand, and the cognitive aspects on the other. This is something to which I return below.

## Late Photography and the Traumatic Sublime

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in the last two decades many photographers have been seen to direct their camera towards a particular place once an event is over and people can be said to have left the scene.<sup>306</sup> Others have chosen to photograph afflicted individuals years or even decades after a certain traumatic event took place.<sup>307</sup> In 2003, writer David Company coined the phrase *late photography* to describe the (works that direct the attention to) “traces, fragments, empty buildings, empty streets, damage to the body and damage to the world” left in the wake of a tragedy.<sup>308</sup> *Aftermath photography* has been used more recently to discuss, for example, the work of Alfredo Jaar and Robert Lyons as well as Jonathan Torgovnik’s images taken following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Others included in this category include Bart Michiels’ series on European battlefields and Rosemary Laing’s images of defunct deten-

306. For example, a series by Frank Schwers show ash-covered buildings and objects in southern Manhattan in mid-September 2001, while Pieter Hugo’s series (2004) includes images of objects left behind ten years after the genocide in Rwanda. Zarina Bhimji’s *Love series* (1998–2006) presents abandoned spaces as well as run-down buildings and forsaken objects in the region of Uganda from which she and her family were driven out during the rule of Idi Amin in 1972. Ishiuchi Miyako’s series *ひろしま/hiroshima* (2007) include photographs of clothing and other objects from the atomic blast at Hiroshima. Finally, Akram Zaatar’s *Earth of Endless Secret* (2010) unearths and documents objects that testify to the current cultural and political conditions of Lebanon.

307. Steven Laxton and Guillaume Herbaut, for example, document individuals and objects sixty years after the atrocities of the Second World War.

308. David Company, “Safety in Numbness: Some Remarks on the Problems of ‘Late Photography’”, in David Green (ed.), *Where Is the Photograph?* (Brighton: Photoworks/Photoforum, 2003), p. 124.

tion centres in Australia.<sup>309</sup> As precursor to these discussions is an article by cultural theorist Ulrich Baer published in 2000 discussing two photographs of Holocaust sites by Dirk Reinartz and Mikael Levin.<sup>310</sup> Baer argues that the extensive and ever-expanding attention given to the Holocaust from artists, scholars and the media often serves to obscure and even block understandings of the ways in which the Holocaust has affected cultural productions. He explains how the question of the difficulty or even impossibility of imagining or picturing the events of the Holocaust drowns in the maelstrom of hermetically packaged productions that claim to represent the events in one way or another. As Baer goes on to describe, “decades-long debates over the Holocaust’s resistance to representation and conceptualization” are not seen as being derived from the events themselves but rather, and mistakenly, seen as “mere academic habits of thought.”<sup>311</sup> The very word *Holocaust* itself tends to trigger an assembly of familiar images and conceptions, many of them that can be reduced to “mute clichés”, without the ability to open up any empathy or even critical thought. Against this, Baer discusses the series by Reinartz and Levin, bringing up precisely the lack of recognisable signifiers in the depictions as not producing such reflexive reactions or “cognitive numbing”. In this way, he suggests a possibility of bringing to the fore wider questions of “the structural difficulties of representing trauma and of the poetics of witnessing.”<sup>312</sup>

This idea of the possibility of apparently “empty” photographs of historical sites drawing the viewer in with minimal or no reference to any recognisable signifiers, then, returns in more recent reflections around so-called late or aftermath photography.<sup>313</sup> In these reflections, connections are often made with the notion of the sublime in its different forms. Most commonly, Jean-Francois Lyotard’s elaborations on the notion is referred to in connection to those depic-

309. By Frank Möller, *Visual Peace: Images, Spectatorship, and the Politics of Violence* (Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Veronica Tello, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Aftermath Photography”, *Third Text*, 28/6, 2014, pp. 555–562; Sonja Fessel, “The Absence of Atrocity: Bart Michiels’ the Course of History Photographs”, *History of Photography*, 36/3, 2012, pp. 315–325.

310. Ulrich Baer, “To Give Memory a Place: Holocaust Photography and the Landscape Tradition”, *Representations*, 69/1, Winter 2000, pp. 38–62.

311. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

312. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

313. As I return to below, the aesthetics of late or aftermath photography is nevertheless dependent on contextual information that is given or found out about the sites or objects depicted.

tions that point towards experiences or those aspects of reality that are *unrepresentable*.<sup>314</sup> In her discussion of Rosemary Laing’s series *Welcome to Australia* (2004), art theorist Veronica Tello refers to Gene Ray’s concept of the *traumatic sublime*, the twentieth-century version of the notion. In the eighteenth-century the sublime tended to refer to the fear- and awe-inspiring, and potentially destructive, forces of nature. Ray describes how, in the twentieth (and, I might add, twenty-first) century, the sublime is more usefully applied to what he refers to as “structures of barbarisms”.<sup>315</sup> Tello specifies the latter as the “nodes of the state of exception and imposition of bio-political violence characteristic of colonialism, genocide, Fascism, detention centres.”<sup>316</sup> Following Emmanuel Kant, the notion of the sublime here involves an encounter with an edge of some kind, with something that cannot be assimilated into an experiencing subject’s existing set of concepts.<sup>317</sup> In the traumatic sublime, however, this encounter typically does not involve the forces of nature, as these are now generally seen as succumbing to human influence, but involves rather the outer limits of the powers of human destructivity.<sup>318</sup> This is a limit at which the extent of the human potential to destroy itself and the world around it appears to have reached a point that is unfathomable to the human mind. As in many of the ideas in trauma theory mentioned above, the experience of the traumatic sublime bypasses mental conceptions and hits the physical body and the emotions, and remains here as something to potentially be worked through in this dimension. In what follows,

314. For example in Fessel, “The Absence of Atrocity”; Tello, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Aftermath Photography”.

“[T]he limits of representation”, as Saul Friedländer put it, became a major point of discussion in the early 1980s. Georges Didi-Huberman’s book *Images in Spite of All* (2008) revived this debate after a long hiatus. See Saul Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the ‘Final Solution’* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

315. Gene Ray, *Terror and the Sublime in Art and Critical Theory: From Auschwitz to Hiroshima to September 11* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

316. Tello, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Aftermath Photography”, p. 557.

317. Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

318. Unless, that is, the natural disasters are considered to be caused by human activity (anthropogenic), such as weather phenomena related to changing temperature. In such cases the traumatic sublime could well be applied.

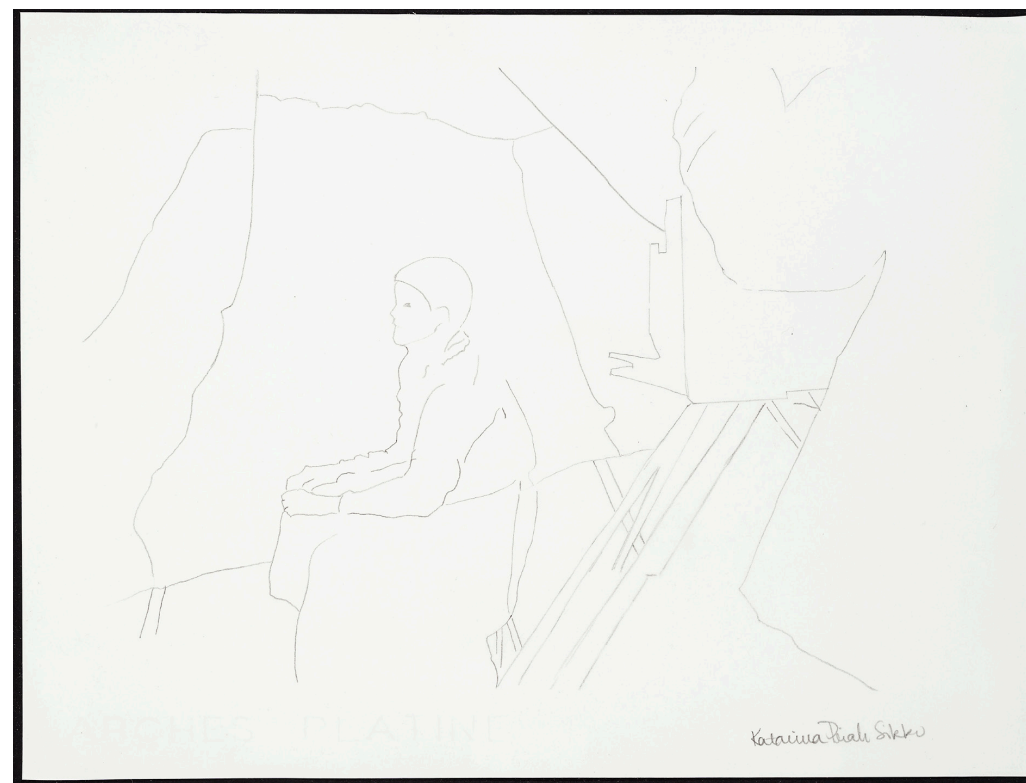
I return to some of Katarina Pirak Sikku's work examined at the outset, as well as Serkan Taycan's series *Habitat* from the previous chapter, and look at how they relate to violent events of history that are still of great impact today.

### Engagements with Trauma

As I discussed in chapter one, Pirak Sikku approaches the historical events in which Sami populations of Sweden became the objects of racial research like a trauma that needs to be processed and mourned in the present through her own body and actions. She starts off her investigation with the question of whether or not grief can be inherited through generations. If so, where does this grief reside? And how does one approach it in the present? I described how, in addition to going through the archives and dealing with the material that she found there, Pirak Sikku also retraced the steps of the racial researchers as they went about their investigations into different parts of Sápmi. On the gallery wall she draws maps of her own tracks in the different locations. In other aspects of her process, she outlines the bodies of the people who were once photographed naked during the research. (fig. 67) In Pirak Sikku's own experience, these were the most difficult to see and experience.<sup>319</sup> In this way, she processes the impact of the photographs on her own body through drawing their contours, not directly showing but still pointing to the existence of the bodies that once stood naked in front of the camera. As in the photographs themselves, she delineates them angularly, from the front and the side. In addition, she also brings her own body into the process, by photographing herself naked from these same perspectives, trying to get closer to an embodied sense of what it might have been like to have one's naked body documented as an object of research. In the exhibition *Namaheamiid luottat – De namnlösas spår* ('The Traces of the Nameless') she includes the image of herself as an enlarged silhouette within the display.<sup>320</sup> As I described in chapter one, another large-scale photograph shows the artist sitting against a white sheet, with the Sápmi landscape around her, trying on her own

319. From conversations with the artist, December 2015.

320. I am here referring to Pirak Sikku's exhibition *Namaheamiid luottat – De namnlösas spår* held in Uppsala in December 2015 – May 2016. The works shown here have been exhibited elsewhere in slightly different constellations.



face one of the measuring tools that were used in the research. Once again, she wanted to get a physical and emotional sensation of what it may have felt like to be studied in this manner. She describes the feelings of shame and grief that arose from the process of making the drawings and subjecting her own body to this highly emotional procedure.<sup>321</sup> In this way, Pirak Sikku approaches the "deep memories" of the events that she deals with, trying to get closer to the sensory recall, the emotional and embodied details of the experiences. A connection

67) Katarina Pirak Sikku, *Muitobálgát* (*Map of Memories*), 2013. Courtesy of Mikael Lundgren and the artist

321. Bildmuseet, "Katarina Pirak Sikku", interview, 6 February 2014, <<https://vimeo.com/86000029>>, accessed 23 November 2016.



can be made to the notion of the traumatic sublime set out above. The human capacity to control or destroy is something that bypasses mental conceptions and hits the physical body and the emotions. At the same time, Pirak Sikku recognises that the feelings as well as the embodied sensations involved in putting herself in the research situations are not those of the people in the archival images. While the process becomes a way of dealing with her own emotions that are awakened through engaging with the archival material, and the objects of this process have the potential of opening up such a process in the willing perceiver, Pirak Sikku recognises the impossibility of reaching the historical events themselves in the process. Her feelings and embodied experience of the engagement, or that of the perceiver, can never be a translation or in any way a reaching back to the experiences that once were. What are being processed are the feelings and sensations of situated bodies in the present. The question of whether or not grief can be inherited remains open.

When following the paths of the researchers, Pirak Sikku also takes photographs of the landscape, the views and the actual sites at which the researchers and their assistants set up camp and carried out the documentations. (fig. 68) She presents these in the exhibition in the form of large-size photographs of the landscape and buildings that still remain at the research sites. More than just empty sites with the potential of opening up associations to events in the past, Pirak Sikku explains how she approaches the landscape as holding its own memories, as if nature itself is able to remember.<sup>322</sup> For Pirak Sikku, the journey is as important as the photographs, as she brings her own body into the engagement with the paths and sites at which she takes them; documenting, reflecting, processing and re-working in different ways what appears along the journey. At the same time, the landscape and site photographs play a particular role in this process, a role that becomes most apparent in contrast with the archival material. As I discussed in the previous chapter, there is also inevitably a “margin of excess” in the ethnographic images; an inability to exclude details and information that are beyond the intention of the photographer.<sup>323</sup> Pirak Sikku describes how she would at times lose herself in observing the details of the clothes and jewellery in the images. Those depicting Anna, as mentioned already, are remarkable for their ability to evoke a sense of pride. This is already apparent in Anna’s

322. Ibid.

323. As mentioned, the notion of the “margin of excess” is taken from Pinney, “Introduction”.



expression and demeanour, and emerges with even more clarity though Pirak Sikku’s work. As a whole, however, the ethnographic images served the purpose of identifying, typecasting, and pinning down that which was documented. The aim was to use photography to place the objects within a pre-existing classifying system and seal off their meaning as much as possible. Pirak Sikku’s own photographs of the sites and landscapes where the research was carried out can be said to serve the opposite purpose, namely opening up understandings that were hitherto withheld from experience. The large-size depictions of summer in Sápmi, like other images in the trend of aftermath photography, say nothing of the events themselves. They do, however, give a visceral sense of the situated land through which the researchers and their assistants made their journeys and carried out the research. Several of the photographs show water in the shape of a stream or mountain lake. (fig. 69) In the images, the coldness of the greys and

68) Katarina Pirak Sikku, *Badjelántta luottat (Impressions from the land above)*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist



69) Katarina Pirak  
Sikku, *Badjelántta  
luottat* (*Impressions  
from the land above*),  
2013. Courtesy of the  
artist

greens come forth as well as the depths suggested of the lake or the strength of the stream that cuts through the rocky landscape. In the photographs with the stream, most of the images are filled with the water itself and the rocks and moss-covered ground on its side. Only a narrow gap at the top of the images shows the cloudy sky above and a mountain in the background, suggesting the vastness of the surrounding landscape. The cold green of the water is suggestive of newly melted ice or snow and the layered rocks on its side look like they have been cut open to allow the water to flow through, with the surging water making its way around its sharp edges.

For Pirak Sikku herself, however, the landscape photographs are deceptively beautiful. They say little either of the harshness of the climate of these lands or of the historical events that took place there. For this reason, when exhibited, she balances the beauty and calmness of the photographs with an installation of

shards of glass lit from below with a cold green light. Above the glass shards she presents a landscape painting that she made of the lands in question. Executed in shades of grey and black, it altogether avoids the lushness and calmness of the landscape photographs. However, like the latter, the installation and painting are expressions that come out of the embodied experience of moving through the landscape and visiting the sites at which the events were carried out. Aspects of this embodied experience are able to come across in the photographs of the land itself, whereas other parts, involving more sinister or foreboding sensations, find their expressions through other means. I describe above how trauma can be understood as those memories or experiences that resist cognitive processing. In a number of ways, Pirak Sikku engages herself with such memories or experiences that to a large extent remain outside verbal-semantic-linguistic representation. As I point out above, however, in relation to certain voices in the field of trauma theory, the working through of these events cannot and should not be understood as a return to some kind of state of normality that once was. It is not a process that leaves us with clear answers about the traumatic events, what they meant and the nature of their repercussions in the present. On the contrary, the different processes with which Pirak Sikku engages can be seen as an ongoing creative practice with the potential to open up new understandings and new affective possibilities in a never-ending process of becoming.

In the particular historical events dealt with by Pirak Sikku, photography is an intrinsic part of the trauma itself. In chapters four and five, I discuss how photography can at times be understood as enacting a kind of secondary violence, or violating for a second time the already violated. In an article on photography and historical trauma in Tasmania, art historian Jessica Neath describes how, when trauma “enters the representational arena it becomes vulnerable to appropriation, reduction and mimicry”.<sup>324</sup> The methods through which Pirak Sikku approaches the archival material and the situations that she deals with can be

324. Jessica Neath, “Empty Lands: Contemporary Art Approaches to Photographing Historical Trauma in Tasmania”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, 36/3, 2012, p. 316. Neath here writes about the kind of terminology that has been used to criticise photographic practices as a way of gaining power over others, or even violating them. This has been expressed most cogently and influentially in the writings of Susan Sontag in *On Photography*, who famously claimed that “[t]o photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed”. Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 14.



seen as a way of sidestepping the risk of acting out another trauma through photography. She avoids showing the actual images but instead works through them in a number of ways that places at the forefront her own affective and embodied experience rather than claiming to represent that of someone else. Directing the camera to the “empty” sites at which traumatic events once occurred is another way of circumventing a secondary trauma.<sup>325</sup> Bringing attention to space itself and avoiding any direct visual reference to particular events or people becomes a way of using the power of photography to emotionally and viscerally affect the perceiver, without bringing the trauma that is dealt with into the realm of representation, with all the risks that this entails.<sup>326</sup>

In the preceding chapter, I discussed the notion of entropy in relation to Taycan’s *Habitat* and how, in certain images in this series (and others using a similar kind of aesthetics), there is a possibility for a shift in perspective to occur. I described this in terms of human efforts, and the discourses and structures that are used to explain these, appearing as temporary deviations from the entropy that governs nature and the universe as a whole. I began to touch upon how, in several of the images in the series, human constructions appear to diminish in relation to the vastness of the landscapes, as, for example a collection of houses that appear as specks of colour on the side of a mountaintop, or a clothesline that tapers off into the whiteness of a snowy landscape. Even as a village of Ardahan in north eastern Turkey, near the Georgian border, is given space in centre stage, it is the vastness and muteness of the surrounding land that comes into sight. At the same time, however, some of the photographs bring to mind narratives

325. Or as Geoffrey Batchen puts it, a way of utilising “photography’s still-powerful capacity to speak about events in the world without reproducing, in the infrastructure of one’s own work, the very political inequities that one wants to contest”. Geoffrey Batchen, “Looking Askance”, in Geoffrey Batchen et al. (eds.), *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (London: Reaktion, 2012), p. 233.

326. At the same time, however, this very same lack of signifiers can also be seen as the foundation to criticise the ethics of many of the types of photographs referred to here. Campamy has criticised the sense of removal, or the mode of sombre melancholia, as a dangerously familiar state through which to perceive so-called aftermath photography. Campamy, “Safety in Numbness”.

As I have argued previously, however, the images themselves involve nothing more than a dormant potential to engage with a particular historical event. It takes a willing perceiver, disposed to come up against one’s own edge, to enter this space of affective negotiation.

of the divisions between peoples in the land or even specific historical events, with particular strength. One of the images shows a crack in the landscape of the province of Kars, near the Armenian border. (fig. 70) Although the image itself is empty of any direct references, it would be difficult for most observers to view it without being reminded of pre-First World War events, including the Armenian massacres, as well as the subsequent contestation of this history.<sup>327</sup> The image shows a mountainous landscape with a small stream flowing through a cleft between two mountain ranges. The land is rocky and barren and clouds cast a shadow on some of the peaks. A number of houses appear as colourful dots on one side of the stream, with the blue and white of the buildings mirrored in the sky overhead. As in the images above, the focus is not on the mountainside village itself, but rather the landscape that surrounds it, the vastness of which absorbs the human activity it contains. Knowing the struggles over belonging that have been carried out in this area only further reinforces this sense of the land itself subsuming the narratives and memories of the history and politics to which it relates.

Another image from the series shows the ruin of an Armenian church in the same area of Kars. (fig. 71) The photograph shows a flat, dry landscape that extends into a low horizon. The sky is blue with scattered clouds. In the centre of the image a partially ruined Orthodox church dome stands against the cloud-filled sky. Red metal poles obtrude where parts of the earth-coloured stones of the buildings have disappeared. They appear to prop up what is left of the ruins. The metal bars give a sense of the effort that was once put into its construction. Around the ruin are scattered rocks, some of which appear to once have been a part of the building, whilst others look as if they belong to the rocky landscape itself. The image shows the extent to which the lands and objects of past and present are used as collateral in the struggles over authentic belonging to a particular place. Furthermore, from a representational perspective, the image can be said to be about the particular history of Armenian presence in this land. Its subject can be said to be all those events that the image does not contain. It follows, therefore, that analysis concerns itself with precisely the lack of these events in the image proper, with the result that the “emptiness” of the

327. Without making a claim that his word as the artist is in any way final, this is also the perspective of the artist himself. From a conversation with Taycan, March 2011.

70–71) Serkan  
Taycan, *Habitat*  
2008. Courtesy of the  
artist



image is brought into focus.<sup>328</sup> In directing attention to the affective experience, however, what comes across is a sense of belonging on a level that does not rely on the narratives of history or stories of identity; a sense which is connected to these stories but which extends into the infinity of the sensate experience of the materiality and the landscape itself. As I touched upon in the last chapter, this is a perspective from which the stories and narratives are found at the margins, and the land and the un-dissected life that is lived on it takes precedence. A perspective that does not live on conceptualisations, but travels in lived bodies as emotions and affects. What comes forth is a sensation not only of the past but also of the land and the physical spaces in which the past has been acted

328. Such as in the writings of Neath, “Empty Lands” and Baer, “To Give Memory a Place”.



out. From this standpoint, human enactments retreat into the background and the land itself is foregrounded as the enduring soil on which the struggles of history are acted out.

Once again, part of apprehending trauma is that it resists cognitive processing and cannot be directly accessed through conceptual understanding. The traumatic experience is connected to particular historical and/or personal events, but its affective and embodied experience extends far beyond what can be reached by the facts or assumptions around the events themselves. My argument here is not that photographs, such as those that can be seen to belong to the trend of aftermath photography, necessarily facilitate the processing of traumatic experience (although as a part of a larger process, such as that of Pirak Sikku above, I would say that this is indeed possible). Rather, my argument is



that, despite their apparent and obvious differences, there is indeed a similarity between the perspective that traumatic experiences force us to take and the aesthetic experience of some of the images that I have studied; a perspective in which affective experience takes precedence over stories.

A further perspective on the processes at work in images that can be said to make use of aftermath aesthetics is the concept of *untaken photographs*, coined by Ariella Azoulay and developed in her book, *The Civil Contract of Photography*. She explores this in relation to works dealing with spaces in Palestine where historically significant events have occurred. More specifically, Azoulay discusses a series by Israeli photographers Miki Kratsman and Boaz Arads (2008-9), which directs the attention to areas of what are now Israel and Palestine (such as Ein Zeitun, Sasa and Safsaf) where massacres took place in 1948. The images depicting these places appear to show little more than a patch of dry soil or some bushes. The events themselves, as in some of the above, survive only as anecdotes amongst the survivors. Meanwhile, the sites of the massacres in no way resemble what they once did. As one of the photographers himself explains, the aim with the series is not to represent what is left of these events, but rather to present a space where precisely nothing is left, where the events and even the place itself have actually been entirely eliminated, and in this way bring out questions around events and places that are normally shrouded in silence.<sup>329</sup> These works become for Azoulay a means to relate to events that in a direct way influence situations in the present, but which lack representation or which have never been caught on camera. By creating *untaken photographs* of a certain place or events, the possibility arises of unfolding new aspects of a situation which had remained hidden. As a result, the perceiver is called upon to participate in the process of creating new understandings in relation to these events and places. Once again, however, while the indeterminacy and “silence” of the depictions can be seen as an invitation to engage affectively with the images, it is not within the power of the photographs themselves to make the perceiver participate in this process, or even care about the events and situations that are presented. Rather, by apprehending them as unfolding new aspects of a situ-

329. See Kratsman's own reflections in Miki Kraftsman, 'Place (Makom)', Tel Aviv: Minerva Humanities Center, 2010 *Maftē'akh* <http://mafteakh.tau.ac.il/en/2010-01/04/> accessed 1 April 2015.

ation, they can be recognised as containing the potential to actively engender new understandings for the situation at hand, leaving it to the willing perceiver to actualise this potential. Without such willingness, however, the works risk remaining hollow depictions of empty places or left-behind objects.

Before moving on, I wish to return for a moment to the interplay between word and image in relation to the works discussed, or, in a wider perspective, to the relationship between affective experience and conceptual understanding. These dynamics are things that I touch upon throughout this book and which come into play in most, if not all, of the works that I have examined. In relation to photographs of apparently “empty” spaces, the interplay between affective experience and conceptual understanding becomes all the more significant. In these images, any affect or embodied experience of the photographs is engendered as much through the facts, knowledge or assumptions that are brought to them, as from the experience of the works themselves. And for the willing perceiver, this interplay continues as more information is gained about the work, and as this knowledge is then once again brought back to their affective experience. In relation to works of aftermath photography, it becomes even clearer that looking at the affective, embodied and situated aspects of photography does not preclude conceptual understanding. On the contrary, concepts and affects are seen as inexorably intertwined; thus, looking at affective experience can be appreciated as a particularly powerful way to find out more, including at a conceptual level, about a particular situation. Deleuze talks about the process of learning not as acquiring knowledge or facts, but the search for those moments or signs that will trigger a radical change in the subject; one that will cause her to think, or be, differently than the moment before.<sup>330</sup> This profound shift is not conceptual or affective and embodied, but always and necessarily both at the same time.

### Surpassing Disaster

In what is left of this chapter, I stay with the relationship between contemporary photography and trauma, whilst moving slightly beyond the geographical boundaries with which I have, by and large, remained. This involves scrutinising

330. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

other works that take on violent events in the former Ottoman lands, in this case in relation to the civil war in Lebanon. I opted to include these examples because they use photography in a way that makes apparent a connection between contemporary photography, trauma, and aspects of the aesthetics of enfoldings/unfolding that I have been developing and using throughout my discussions. More specifically, they enable me to return to the ideas of information and image that Laura Marks develops in relation to her reflections of this aesthetics. Furthermore, I argue that these works make it possible to reach aspects of trauma and its relationship to photography that are not approachable through a representational paradigm.<sup>331</sup>

In relation to Lina Selander's work in chapter two, I touch upon the idea of the artist as being able to increase the shadows, or resurrect that which has gone missing in the wake of material and cultural disasters. In *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*, artist and theorist Jalal Toufic describes a *surpassing disaster* as one that specifically withdraws tradition from a given community, rather than causing total destruction. He explains that this withdrawal is worse than the material destruction of objects, or even the killing of human beings:

Every artist, every writer... knows that we cannot be reduced to creatures who can bleed, laugh, and biologically die. They can make us bleed, laugh, they can treat us like potential terrorists and kill us – that's all. But is that all they can do? Kill us – in the hundreds of thousands? Unfortunately, they can do worse: produce a surpassing disaster and thus a withdrawal of tradition.<sup>332</sup>

When a community has had its traditions withdrawn through a surpassing disaster, it can no longer access its monuments, historical buildings, music, movies, artworks, etc. In other words, the surpassing disaster might affect material objects and cause latent traumas in physical bodies, but, in addition to this destruction, also causes the more insidious immaterial withdrawal of certain works and objects, or the "holiness/specialness of certain places".<sup>333</sup> Even as the material objects themselves have been spared from destruction, the surpassing

331. Of which I argue psychoanalysis is also a part.

332. Jalal Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*, (Forthcoming Books, 2009), p. 70.

333. Ibid., p. 73.

disaster has disabled the community from connecting to the heritage in any kind of meaningful way, thus withdrawing it from history, rendering it latent until work is done to "resurrect" its significance. For Toufic, such work is done by thinkers, artists, musicians and other cultural workers through "caring" for that which has been withdrawn. Examples include movie remakes or the practice of artists bringing back archival images into the present. In terms of Sami culture that the work of Pirak Sikku related to above, and that I explored through the work of both Pirak Sikku and Wajstedt in the first chapter, the destruction can be seen as a long and slow process. It peaked in the nineteenth and early twentieth century with the rise of nationalism, including the introduction of borders in Sápmi, bans on speaking Sami languages in schools and elsewhere, the missionary interventions in the area, as well as the rise of the so-called "racial sciences" and the research that I discuss in chapter one. In the last few years, there has been an increasing number of works by artists that attempt to "resurrect" the significance of different aspects of Sami culture.<sup>334</sup> The "care work" by Pirak Sikku can be understood as a part of this. Its significance becomes all the more apparent when we take into consideration the "silence" and "wordlessness" that Pirak Sikku and others describe as accompanying not only historical events but aspects of Sami culture in general.<sup>335</sup> Caringly engaging with the archival images in innovative ways can be seen as a means of making manifest tradition that has disappeared from view.

According to Toufic, while nothing physically vanishes in the "block universe of space time in which we live", things nevertheless occasionally do withdraw from manifestation.<sup>336</sup> The role of the artist is then seen in terms of its possibility to resurrect that which has not necessarily been destroyed, but which has *gone missing*. Sometimes, however, as Toufic explains, it is not possible to directly resurrect traditions of the past without standing in the way of the profundity of that which is to be resurrected. What is needed, then, is for that which is withdrawn to be "treated by sensitive artists in their own artworks as though destroyed, as unavailable to vision".<sup>337</sup> The lack of this sensibility, or the inability

334. In addition to Wajstedt and Pirak Sikku one could also mention Anders Sunna, Lena Stenberg, Victoria Andersson and Tomas Colbengtson.

335. From a conversation with Pirak Sikku, December 2015.

336. Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*, p. 75.

337. Walid Ra'ad, "Scratching on Things I Could Disavow; a History of Art in the Arab World", exhibition/performance text, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Halles de Schaerbeek, Brussels, 2011

to recognise the withdrawal of tradition as a result of a surpassing disaster, is in fact described by Toufic as a disaster in itself. This happens when, even though traditions have lost much of their vigour and significance, they continue to be treated as if they are still available. At times, when the resurrection of tradition is absent or fails, Toufic describes that there might rather exist an obligation to “suspend transmission (as in not playing certain music or performing certain dances or theatre plays), so as to not hand down counterfeit tradition.”<sup>338</sup> In the works to follow, I reflect on the (im)possibility of resurrecting particular lost traditions and of relating to those historical experiences that cannot find a correspondence in any kind of visual documentation.

In *The Wonder Beirut* project (1997–2006), Lebanese artists Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige create the fictional photographer Abdallah Farah. They relate that, prior to the war the Lebanese Tourism Agency commissioned him to document the most beautiful tourist sites in Beirut with the aim of reproducing them as a series of postcards. According to the artists, while many of the documented buildings have disappeared, the postcards of these sites can still be found in tourist shops around Beirut. As the artists go on to explain, however, when the Civil War broke out in 1976, Abdallah’s studio was burned to the ground, destroying most of his material. However, Abdallah manages to rescue some of his negatives as well as a large amount of un-shot film. As the war proceeds, he carries out a slow destruction of the rescued negatives, burning them bit by bit, as if aiming to have the negatives correspond to the destruction that he witnesses around him. (fig. 72) By the time the conflict is over, Abdallah has completed burning all of the negatives. What is more, during the fighting Abdallah continues taking pictures with the unused film he rescued from his destroyed studio, mostly taking pictures of the people around him and his neighbourhood rather than the war itself. However, having had the rest of his studio destroyed, including the fixatives and paper to develop the images, he leaves them undeveloped, opting instead to describe each photograph that he takes in a notebook, calling the work the “invisible image” or the “image in the text”.

In previous chapters, I discuss Marks’ ideas of how information unfolds into image. She describes how much of contemporary visual culture is really information culture, as what is demanded of the perceiver is often to cognitive-

338. Toufic, *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster*.



ly process the information presented, rather than experience it sensuously. In other words, in the information age, the codes of the archive are there to not only be *read* but also to be potentially re-configured. Similarly, Hadjithomas’ and Joreige’s undeveloped images are there as codes to be cognitively processed by the perceiver, leaving space to consider the wider issue of the (im)possibility of documenting destruction, or of unfolding that which seems to have disappeared. The information remains, to a degree, enfolded and the attention of the perceiver is to some extent drawn to the code rather than its manifestation. For Hadjithomas and Joreige, as well as for their imagined photographer, the extent of the destruction of Beirut cannot find a correspondence in any kind of visual documentation. Or, in the terms that Marks borrowed from Islamic Aesthetics

72) Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Wonder Beirut*, 1997–2006. Courtesy of the artist



and that considered in chapter one, the *batin* is too complex, and perhaps still too painful, to be given an outer form (a *zahir*). As a consequence, what we do not see in these works takes on greater significance than what we do see, and the affect has rather to do with the inconceivability of what remains enfolded rather with what is already presented to one's senses.

In Hadjithomas' and Joreige's piece, images are then seen as unable to point to the chaos or depth of information of the processes of destruction, or even to risk belying this impossibility, by standing in the way of this depth. Developing the images of Abdallah too early risks concealing the extent of the work that needs to be done. Through the violence and chaos of the war, that which had been actual had disappeared into the realm of information, or even the infinite. In other words, that which had had an external form had regressed into latency. Toufic himself bring up this piece when he writes that it is not possible for the photographs such as those by Abdallah to become available without the work of resurrecting the referents that have been withdrawn.<sup>339</sup> The documentations can be saved for the future, not so much in terms of preserving the images of that which has been documented, but of retaining the referent for posterity, to be made available once the work of resurrection has been made. As Toufic points out, the time might come when Hadjithomas and Joreige feel the impulse to develop the rolls of film. When this time comes, it will point to the tradition having been resurrected.

The images of another series, by Lebanese artist Walid Ra'ad, *We decide to let them say, "we are convinced"*, twice (2002/2006), are said to show documentation of the Israeli attack on Beirut in the summer of 1982. Ra'ad describes finding the scratched, undeveloped negatives from this time – and proceeding to have them developed. The images, scored and, at times, burned, show soldiers at rest awaiting orders as well as civilians watching events from afar, with smoke rising from buildings across the city. (fig. 73) Once again, it is as if the direct documentation of the event, the sharp photograph of the effect of the bombs, cannot speak of the destruction that occurred. As with the case of Abdallah above, it is only through damaged documents that it is possible to approach the chaos and magnitude of the devastation. A clear-cut image would strive to contain the destruction in its actual depiction. Conversely, the damaged document reveals

339. Ibid., p. 75.



the impossibility of mediating the events. Ra'ad intentionally refers to Toufic's idea of the kind of disasters that are known through the withdrawal of tradition by dedicating to him another work entitled *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Art in the Arab World Part I\_Chapter One* (2007–ongoing). This deals with the effects of the Lebanese civil war on graphic inscriptions and nonsensical traces. In the piece, Ra'ad explains that it was not only books, material artworks, buildings, and monuments that were destroyed by the war. So too were colours, lines, shapes and forms – all of which became “unavailable to vision.”<sup>340</sup> Sensing their immanent destruction, however, Ra'ad describes

340. Ra'ad, “Scratching on Things I Could Disavow”.

A connection can be made here with Jorge Luis Borges' universal library that I discuss in relation to Akira Mizuta Lippit's ideas in chapter one. This is described as containing not only books but also lines, shapes and forms: “This much is already known: for every sensible

73) Walid Ra'ad, *We decide to let them say, "we are convinced"*, twice, 1982/2004, © Walid Ra'ad

how these qualities adopted defensive measures, such as hiding in the most unexpected places. Tracing these lost shapes and forms, Ra'ad would find them hibernating not within the artworks, as this would make them too conspicuous, but rather around them, in covers, titles, footnotes of books, in dissertations and catalogues, or as letters and diagrams.<sup>341</sup>

The idea of the (im)possibility of documenting destruction returns throughout Ra'ad's work. In *Let's be honest, the weather helped* (1998/2006), small bright coloured circles cover parts of a series of photographs of Beirut sites. (fig. 74) Ra'ad recounts how he used to collect bullets and shrapnel during the war as part of his membership of the fictive Atlas Group, a group of researchers dedicated to researching and documenting the contemporary history of Lebanon. Ra'ad carefully records the location of each discovery through notes and photographs. The coloured dots are said to correspond to the size and hues of the found ammunition. The notebooks catalogue countries that used to supply the different parties fighting in Lebanon: the US, Saudi Arabia, Israel, France, Switzerland, and China.<sup>342</sup> The fluorescent dots that fill the black and white pictures seem oddly out of place. They provide a manifest visualisation that, fictively or not, point to a heavily politically laden code, a power structure that tends to remain invisible, but which is here unfolded into actuality. Another file from the Atlas Group Archive shows a number of photographs of exploded cars, supposedly taken between 1975 and 1991, with the expressed intent to "research, study, and present what was said, believed, known and made public about the car bombs".<sup>343</sup> Once again, the images themselves reveal little. Nevertheless, the set of images showing the carcasses of cars on their own or, more often, surrounded by a group of men staring bewildered at the mess, are suggestive of the archive's ineffectualness. The extensive digital repository of the fictive Atlas Group opens up further reflections on the archiving of destruction and the possibilities of mak-

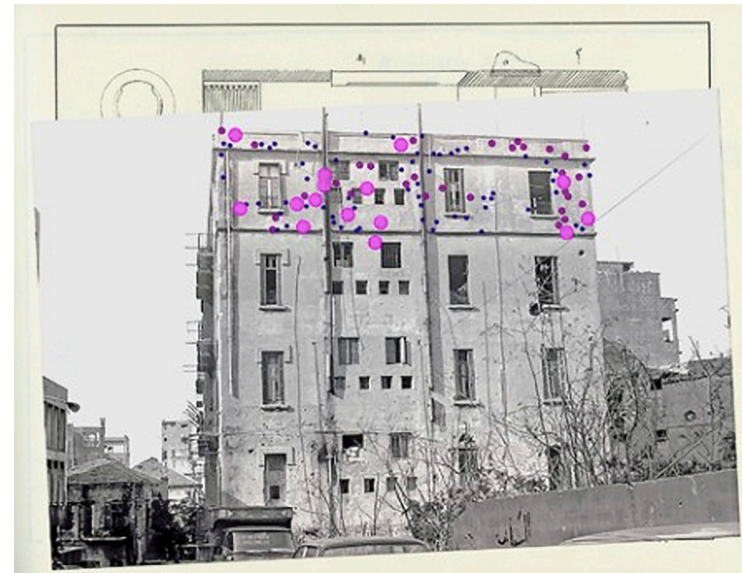
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line of straightforward statement, there are leagues of senseless cacophonies, verbal jumbles and incoherences." Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1962).

341. From Walid Ra'ad, "Scratching on Things I Could Disavow".

342. From The Atlas Group, "Let's Be Honest, the Weather Helped", <<http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/TypeA.html>> accessed 6 May 2011.

343. From The Atlas Group, "The Thin Neck File", <<http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/TypeAGP.html>>, accessed 6 May 2011.



ing manifest that which has remained invisible. More than anything, however, it seems to point to the futility of the project of archiving itself.

74) Walid Ra'ad,  
*Let's be honest, the  
weather helped*,  
1998/2006 © Walid  
Ra'ad

## Conclusion

According to Jill Bennett, looking at the objects or stories of the past in terms of what they signify is not enough. What is needed, rather, is for memory to be "opened up to emphatic connection through their embodiment in present imagination."<sup>344</sup> In this chapter, I have looked at the question of cultural trauma and the possibility of particular works of contemporary photography opening up empathic engagements with traumatic events of history. I began by looking at the field of trauma studies and described how trauma can be seen to involve memories and experiences that resist cognitive processing. Here, I paid par-

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344. Bennett, *Empathic Vision*, p. 132.

ticular attention to those discussions within the field that direct attention to the affects of trauma on the body and senses, as well as on the idea of creative becoming as a potential for healing.

Furthermore, I looked at the trend of aftermath photography and how many artists and photographers in the last few years have directed the camera to those spaces in which violent or traumatic events once occurred, but which contain little or no traces of the events themselves. I returned to the work of Katarina Pirak Sikku and Serkan Taycan to ascertain how these two artists make use of such aesthetics when working with politically and affectively charged historical events. In relation to the work of Pirak Sikku, I also looked at other strategies that the artist uses to engage herself emotionally and physically with traumatic events of history within which photography paid a significant role. Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I initiated a shift in geographical focus in order to scrutinise works by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, as well as those by Walid Ra'ad that relate to the destruction of Beirut during Lebanon's civil war. With these in mind, I returned to the notions of enfolding/unfolding and how the ideas connected to this aesthetics are able to elucidate further aspects of the relationship between trauma and contemporary photography.

Throughout these examples, I have shown how some works can be understood as pointing to the impossibility of documenting certain events of history, while others direct attention to materiality and the land itself as a contrast to this representative amnesia. The latter bring out the potential of more silent photographic evocations to create a presence in which the past is remembered, not as a factual series of events, but as an ongoing presence – one that still has actual repercussions in the way that we act, feel and think in the present.

## *Conclusion*

# Looking Back and a Call to Continue

Throughout this book, I have used the notion of *engaging* to bring together a range of theoretical perspectives in order to move beyond a representational take on photography. In so doing, my aim has been to approach particular photographic works as affective, embodied, and situated interactions or acts. Through the lens of these theoretical perspectives, I have explored a number of different photographic projects that in one way or another deal with the notion of *belonging*. I have described this term as addressing the processes and experiences through which human relationships as well as relations to things, environments, places, and spaces, are generated and experienced. In order to bring close attention to certain photographic works and how they function within particular situated space, I have focused on works from the areas in and around Sweden and Turkey. Inevitably, in relation to my chosen examples, the discussion has also come to focus on the wider question of European experiences of belonging. Throughout the chapters, a variety of connections between the different examples and theories have emerged. In this final part, I wish to pay further attention to the most significant of these by going through them according to the main themes that appear throughout the discussions.

## Unfolding the Archive

In part one of the book, I explored ideas around the archive and what I described as its all-encompassing energies. I looked back at the important role



that photographic technologies have played within different archival histories. In relation to particular examples, the power of technological reproduction as well as the belief in the objectivity of photography were brought up as essential aspects of the part that photography has played in reinforcing and cementing different categories of people, and as such different notions of (non-)belonging. In particular, I looked at commercial as well as scientific uses of photography in the Ottoman Empire/Turkey and Sweden, to show how these processes played out at different times in history.

From this point, I then looked back at these practices through the works of a number of contemporary artists who in different ways take on archival images as their source material. In my exploration of works by İnci Eviner, it became possible to see how certain categories of people, be it the Orient, the Oriental, or the Woman, are turned into objects of consumption through a process of taming, controlling, or *enfolding* in the archival material with which she works. Through the artist's engagement with the images, sometimes interfering with them and rearranging them, I argued that a different kind of *unfolding* is carried out, as that which was enfolded is brought into experience, and that which was frozen, tamed and controlled is made to move and speak. In relation to pieces by Katarina Pirak Sikku, which involves ethnographic archival material of Sami populations in northern Sweden, I discussed the embodied experience of both the artist working with the material, and the embodied experience of her works as a perceiver, as crucial aspects of how they function. Here, the significance of emotions was brought in, in particular of love and care, as perhaps the most essential part of approaching these processes. In my analysis of works by Gülsün Karamustafa, I demonstrated how her engagements with the archive make visible and sensible aspects of the more drastic modernisation projects during the early days of the Turkish Republic. I also drew attention to the way in which some of her practice reveals historical events as being a part of both embodied memories of everyday life and common narratives through which history is told. Finally, in relation to works by Lina Selander, I proposed that there is a possibility of counteracting the all-encompassing categorising energies of the archive, and for bringing in a *not knowing*, or mystery, in relation to the event or place that is being explored.

In this part, I suggested that the significance of many of these works lays not so much in the deconstruction of the concepts and notions involved, as is often the case in photography theory and critique. Rather, I begun to expand

my argument that it is in an affective, situated and embodied approach to the works that it is possible to reach a more enduring understanding of the processes at stake, and perhaps even a possibility of moving beyond these. In relation to these analyses, Laura Marks' notions of *enfolding/unfolding* was brought in as a theoretical perspective on photography that is able to elucidate photography's double function, namely that of *reducing* information and perceptions of the world into a limited set of categories, but also containing a possibility of *unfolding* alternatives to these very patterns and understandings.

In my discussion around the archive, I also touched upon the notion of trauma as interconnected with archival processes. I discussed a kind of metaphorical violence involved in these processes, in terms of all that is reduced, forgotten and destroyed through the act of archiving. As became clear, however, in many cases archival material also relates to actual violent events that have taken place throughout history. In this part of the book, works by Pirak Sikku were considered in relation to notions of trauma and the question of whether cultural trauma can be inherited between generations. In the last part of the book, I then returned to the notion of trauma, and considered more in-depth the role of the physical body in engaging with historical trauma in the present. At this point, some of Pirak Sikku's work, as well as series by Serkan Taycan and others, were addressed in order to consider how dealing with such works through a representational logic bypasses many of the ways in which these works and processes function. Instead, I suggested that through dealing with the sense memory of trauma there is a possibility for lasting transformation by harnessing the affective and the emotive processes that photography can evoke.

## Surveillance Society, Migration, and Power

When discussing the systematising and archival possibilities of photographic technologies in the first section, I also talked about their capacity to take on what Allan Sekula refers to as the "general abstract proposition".<sup>345</sup> This refers to photographic technologies' capacity to systematise and categorise entities of the world – a capability that returns throughout the discussions of this book. Sekula considers the archive in this sense as both an "abstract paradigmatic enti-

345. Sekula, "The Body and the Archive", p. 54.

ty” and a concrete institution, both of which provide the foundation for making comparisons through the general equivalence between images. I then went on to describe how the early promise of photography to systematise and categorise eventually waned in the face of the massive and chaotic archives created. However, the potentials involved in the capacity of the photographic technologies to generalise still survive within visualising technologies of today, something that I then developed further in the second part of the book. In this second part, I described the central role that photographic technologies still play in the processes that categorise the beings of the world according to different schemes. In particular, the extensive use of different kinds of visualisation technologies were discussed in relation to processes of migration. Against the backdrop of contemporary surveillance societies, I took a closer look at works that can be understood as taking on some of the patterns that are put in place with the help of photographic technologies today. Furthermore, a number of works were analysed in terms of the different ways in which they reveal the negotiations involved within these systems of control, and how they unfold migration and diaspora as embodied and lived processes within singular situations.

More specifically, I looked at works by Tina Enghoff, in particular her project *Migrant Documents*, which can be seen as an exploration of the system that has to be navigated when living as an undocumented migrant, in this case in Copenhagen. What the work reveals, however, are not so much the migrants’ positions within the system, but rather their physical existence and material circumstances as they try to navigate this system and avoid being registered by it. Similarly, works by Banu Cennetoğlu can be understood as in different ways registering and making available through affective engagement the tensions and comings and goings of migration in two different situated spaces – suburban Istanbul and a detention centre in central Europe. In relation to works by photographers Carlos Zaya and Coşkun Aral, I considered their impact within the arena of public space. As was made clear, these works lead to differing and sometimes opposing reactions. There is therefore nothing evident in terms of what the images will lead to. Nevertheless, I suggested how there is at least a potential for these engagements to act as *little resistances* and of affecting the political in relation to a wider understanding of migration today.

Furthermore, in relation to these works, another significant aspect of the role of contemporary photography in relation to the question of belonging was explored; namely that of the complex ways in which photographs and photo-

graphic projects are able to (or at times not) act as agents of change. Directly related to this is the question of power relations and the role that photographic technologies play both in reinforcing, rearranging or contesting them. I described how Aral and Zaya, as well as Enghoff, reflect on the dynamics involved in the position of being a photojournalist, a photographer, and/or an artist. In relation to another of Enghoff’s many outreach projects, I deliberated on what it means to explore one’s surroundings with camera in hand. Consideration was given to the particular situated experiences of being a migrant in Denmark, specifically the experience of being a producer rather than merely a passive participant or product. In relation to another project by Taycan, I discussed the act of engaging with the politically charged situation of Istanbul’s drastic urbanisation plans with camera in hand. Furthermore, I also temporarily moved beyond the art world in my discussion, by looking at the role that photography played in the Gezi protests in Istanbul in 2013 and 2014, as well as one of Susan Meiselas’ online projects around Kurdish identity. In relation to these situations and projects, my argument was that their function is less perceivable through a representative logic and more effectively engaged with through an ontological model, which takes them on precisely as affective and embodied *acts*.

In relation to the book as a whole, many of the works that I look at can be seen as concrete examples of how the phenomena of belonging is found not in the abstract space of concepts and ideas, but in the situated spaces in which they are acted out and encountered. In the introduction, I described how Sweden is rarely discussed in terms being a borderland to Europe, or even “semi-peripheral” to the West in general. In the work of Pirak Sikku, for example, this idea is brought out not as a concept, but as an intensely affective and embodied experience. Taycan’s *Habitat*, furthermore, brings out the particular details of a sense of (non-)belonging in a specific place in Anatolia, with its range of personal and historical connotations, to be sensed and felt. Throughout all these images it is possible to see how otherwise abstract ideas around geography and borders become concrete, situated experiences.

## Materiality and Trauma

Throughout the chapters, not only certain notions and themes but also artists and particular artworks and projects returned to be discussed from different perspectives. In the third and final part of the book, I returned to some of the examples that I discussed previously, in order to look more closely at the role of materiality. Here, I developed further the argument that seeing the photographs through a representative approach is not necessarily the most fruitful means of analysis. Taycan's series *Habitat* was analysed in terms of how it brings out how the phenomenon of non-belonging is to a large extent a question of an embodied experience of materiality. Similarly, in Hendrik Zeitler's series 424, the high-resolution images make sensible the extent to which belonging, or non-belonging, can be seen as acts that are carried out in relation to one's material environment. The argument was that a significant part of their impact can be found in what is affectively and viscerally revealed through the images about the material spaces within which belonging is acted out. From this perspective, understanding becomes what happens in the material world, in the body of the perceiver and his/her actions, as s/he keeps looking and acting, rather than in the concepts referring to it. The notion of materiality in relation to photography, then, partly remained as I went on to discuss the trend of so-called *aftermath aesthetics* and how certain images are able to provide a way into material and embodied understandings of trauma. Here, works by Pirak Sikku were considered more closely, and in particular those in which she documents the sites and landscapes where ethnographic research on Sami populations in northern Sweden was once carried out. I argued that Pirak Sikku's actions serve the opposite purpose from the ethnographic material in the archives that she works with. If the latter sought to identify, typecast, and pin down that which is photographed, Pirak Sikku's images of the landscape can be seen rather as opening up, or *unfolding*, understandings that were hitherto withheld from experience. In this discussion, parts of Taycan's series *Habitat* were also looked at in more detail. These images make visible and sensible how land and objects in rural Anatolia have been used as collateral in the struggles over authentic belongings to a particular place. They, like other images deploying a similar kind of aesthetic, bring about a perspective on the traumatic events that are being explored in which stories and narratives are found at the margins, and the land and the un-dissected life that is lived on it takes precedence. This is an understanding that does not live on

its conceptualisations, but which travels in lived bodies as emotions and affects, or as the deep or sensate memories of past events, which affect the meetings and interactions that are carried out in everyday lives. At the end of this part, I moved beyond the geographical area that I have been focusing on so far, and looked at a number of works that deal with the destruction of Lebanon during the civil war. Returning here to Marks' idea of *unfolding*, and in particular the notions of information and image in relation to this idea, I talked about the difficulty, or impossibility, of resurrecting (as Jellal Toufic describes) that which has been destroyed through particular violent events.

In the last part of the book, I also delved deeper into a question that I touch upon throughout the preceding discussions; namely the relation between word and image, or, from a wider perspective, between concepts and affective experience. To some extent, all of the photographs discussed throughout the book are dependent on words and concepts. In relation to the works analysed in this part, however, and in particular those that depict seemingly empty spaces where historical events have occurred, the knowledge given or found out about the events are particularly significant components of the embodied and affective experiences that I explore. As I described, looking at the affective, embodied and situated aspects of photography does not exclude conceptual understanding. On the contrary, concepts and affects are seen as inevitably intertwined, and looking at affective experience can be seen as a particularly powerful way into finding out more, also on a conceptual level, about a particular situation.<sup>346</sup> I here made reference to Gilles Deleuze who writes about the process of learning, not as acquiring knowledge or facts, but as a search for those moments or signs that will lead to some kind of radical change in the subject. This shift is neither conceptual nor affective and embodied, but always and necessarily both at the same time. While I spend some time discussing this in the book, I cannot be said to do justice to its significance or complexity. This is something that I would like to have the opportunity to research further in the future.

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346. Even recent research on emotions in neuroscience tells us that emotions are not hard-wired into the body, but result from learned concepts. See, for example, neuroscientist and psychologist Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).



## A Call to Continue

Alongside the theoretical discussions and analyses above, I have paid consistent attention to how the presence and influence of photography in the art world has continuously increased during the time frame that the book covers. This has also led to a contemporary history of photography that, whilst in no way conclusive, nevertheless makes visible a wider shift from “commissioned documentary” to socially engaged explorations of the medium itself. This is something that merits much further investigation and reflection in the future. In relation to this shift, I argue that expanding the theoretical toolbox through which photography is perceived becomes all the more relevant. What’s more, throughout my research, I came across a number of works that have not found a place in this book. I chose to focus on those works that have the potential to unfold new understandings of the phenomenon of belonging from a non-representational approach. Even so, there are a number of works that fit this category, and which I would have liked to include, but which time and space limitations would not allow. In terms of other associated and unrelated themes, there is an even greater number of works, from both within and outside the art world, which I would argue would benefit greatly from the approach that I have been arguing for here. As such, I end this book with a call to continue to explore and unfold the affective, embodied, and other non-representational aspects of photography.

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