Being nowhere – Meet me in the third space!

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1   The child refugee as a sign of increasing segregation and conflict

"I was a stranger and you took me in." Writing on Olu Oguibe's contested public sculpture erected for the documenta in Kassel, Germany, in 2017 and taken down in 2018 after public protest.

In this text I want to focus on the conditions for Social Cultural Work with young refugees in a climate of increasing racism and societal segregation. While the situation of an unaccompanied minor refugee in Germany is already very precarious, the pressure is growing with new restrictions in the asylum system. In this regard the group of unaccompanied minor refugees can be viewed as an extreme example of general developments in many societies around the world and as a reflection of a continuing colonial divide with intensifying conflicts in our world today.

As an approach for tackling this situation, I want to reflect on the lessons gained from a Reverse Anthropology approach as well as the concept of a third space and its use for actual Social Cultural Work in this field. Especially when adressing the effects of coloniality and the increasing societal segregation all around the world, these concepts can be of use for the theory and practice of Social Cultural Work.

In the second part of the article I will describe an actual project in the field of Social Cultural Work with young unaccompanied refugees which was started in 2016 at the Alice-Salomon-University of Applied Sciences in alliance with evin e.V.. In this project videos were made and scenes enacted that – in often unexpected ways – facilitated the expression and articulation of the horrors of a life on the margins and as a target for the increasing racism. The video making and acting also helped establish a third space for coming together against all odds and in recognition of the differences.

The new year started in 2019 with a terrorist attack on groups of supposed migrants (refugees/ strangers) in Bottrop, Germany. Far from the predicted "end of history" (Fukuyama 1989), violence and ideologies of all kinds – including religion – are on the rise, and more and more people are excluded and forced to remain "below their potential" (Galtung 1969: 168). We are living in times of heightened conflict – on a local and global scale.

After concepts of "insurgent cosmopolitanism", (de Sousa Santos 2006) we are currently in a time of retreat into discourses of nationalism. Walls are put up and even seem to have a therapeutic effect upon many people – as a protection from the threats of terrorism and all ills that could make life miserable.On the other side, though, migration and transculturalism are facts in the lives of most people on this planet today, and digitalization has – despite predictions of a digital divide deeper than the chasm with analogue media – connected many of the people left out by analogue media. So we live the paradox of thorough interdependency

and of an era in which walls and border fences are being built more than ever, making the Berlin Wall seem like a model for the future instead of a reminiscence of the past.

While the by now almost forgotten "Arab spring", which was started by the movement of unemployed academics in Tunisia and then became the struggle for a life in dignity, rapidly spread as a common cause around the world, the conditions of the 99 percent have not improved since then but deteriorated further. In the new Oxfam Report, presented at the World Economic Forum 2019 in Davos, Switzerland, it is stated in the introduction:

> The number of billionaires has doubled since the financial crisis and their fortunes grow by \$2.5bn a day, yet the super-rich and corporations are paying lower rates of tax than they have in decades. The human costs – children without teachers, clinics without medicines – are huge. Piece meal private services punish poor people and privilege elites. Women suffer the most, and are left to fill the gaps in public services with many hours of unpaid care (Oxfam 2019, p 1).

Migration as a reality of the present and the figure of the refugee as described by Giorgio Agamben (1995) and Hannah Arendt (1943) have become the centre of debate in many societies and a scapegoat for the effects of growing societal segregation. When looking at the refugee as "pure wo*man", we only recently came to detect a specific and growing group: unaccompanied minors. While the total number of unaccompanied minors who arrive in the European Union has fallen since 2015, as has the total number of refugees due to the enforcement and externalization of the EU border regime, the proportion of unaccompanied, separated children has increased by 31 percent in 2017 (Unicef 2017).

When borders are closed but wars and armed conflicts as well as social inequality increase, children and minors are sent by families or travel as street children seeking a better future and/or survival for themselves and their families. So one could say that they represent the crises of growing inequality and the violence which these crises transport and of which they are an effect (according to Galtung 1969). And they represent the most vulnerable group inside an "extremely marginalized group" (Seukwa 2017)[1], the refugees.

And at the same time, the unaccompanied minor does not only carry this burden as the avantgarde of the avant-garde – to speak with Giorgio Agamben (1995) – but also has become a scapegoat for many people in the Global North. The predominantly male children and minors are seen as a potential threat and seem to be a blue screen for projections. As many of them are Muslim, they represent the ideal "other" with anti-Muslim racism on the rise.

2   Access denied

A paramount slogan of the Refugee Struggle which amounted to the first social movement of refugees in Germany (Plöger 2014) that started in 2013 was: "Break isolation". The isolation of refugees in Germany was and is again conditioned by their accommodation in often isolated camps with the prohibition to work and study as well as limited access to medical treatment. Furthermore, the Dublin regulations keep a large part of the refugees who arrive at the fringes of the EU in limbo for years.

Even the way to the fringes of the EU often takes years and leads through a zone of systematic human rights violations in countries which serve as a cordon sanitaire for the EU

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[1] Translation by the author of this text.

but do not fall under its human rights policies. The violence which is exacted on refugees in these transit zones is in stark contrast to the promise of human rights. As a consequence, the access of journalists, lawyers, doctors, and human rights activists has been constantly undermined by EU state governments.

According to Louis Seukwa, scientific research on the biographies of refugees with a fragile status allows for the research of the receiving societies "from the margins" because the figure of the refugee and "her/his miserable life conditions" can tell us a lot about the "nature of the system which has generated them"[2] (Seukwa 2016, 113).

Separated children or child refugees suffer greatly in this situation, without the chance of intervention by any party. And only a tiny percentage, and more so those who are male and in their adolescence, succeed in making their way to the EU. In many instances they have relatives in their background who help them on their way into the EU. And from this already small portion a lot less make their way into Germany.

Upon arrival in Germany, as unaccompanied minors, they will be taken into the custody of the youth welfare office and are entitled to adequate housing and care if it can be "proven"[3] that they are indeed under the age of 18.

Although the legal situation is clear, its implementation in the practice of social work is not always adequate, nor do social work institutions always see and exact a clear mandate in the name of their clients. They are often not sufficiently equipped and lack the experience to deal with this group.

"The situation of accompanied and unaccompanied minor refugees in Germany has not been sufficiently researched and is only being included rudimentarily in pedagogical studies up to now", writes Claus Melter. And he continues that also in Germany studies hint at a "systematic violation of the rights of minor refugees" with no adequate response from the accountable authorities (Melter: 2015, p. 151)[4]. He claims that social workers need to take a clear position as advocates of the rights of their clients and that only "critical ambition" can account for a social worker who perceives her/his work in this way (Gebrande & Melter & Bliemetsrieder 2017).

Whereas access to basic services and decent living conditions as well as to medical and especially the often needed psychological support and to legal services is already difficult, it becomes very frustrating for young refugees when they try to advance their education. From the outright denial of the right to education for refugee children and minors, there are now different policies and concepts for inclusion – depending on the policy of the responsible federal state (Ludwig 2017)[5] and an improvement compared to the (legal) situation before 2015 can be observed. Foremost the possibility to seek and obtain an apprentice training position can be gained even when in the process of seeking asylum and can also exempt the

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[2] Translation by the author of this text.
[3] The methods to identify the age of unaccompanied refugees who claim to be under the age of 18 vary. Practices such as x-raying the hands, the dentition or the collarbone, or a general assessment of the body – sometimes also including the genital organs – are in use. Organisations such as the German Children's Aid Network doubt that there are measures to exactly determine the age of a person
[4] Translation by the author of this text.
[5] In the actual legal situation in Germany, this applies to newly arriving children and minors and can continue to apply for those who are viewed as coming from secure third countries.

asylum applicant from deportation – at least for the time of the apprentice training. What still remains impossible is access to higher education if there is no granted asylum. And even then, access to financial support for university studies remains difficult, as does the chance to obtain a place at a university.

While child refugees have the least access and neither resources nor means to aim for their representation, the seemingly impossible has become real in the case of "Youth Without Borders" ("Jugendliche ohne Grenzen", JOG) in the past 15 years in Germany.

Ibrahim Kanalan, a founding member of JOG, wrote in a number of articles about the barriers that migrant youths and unaccompanied minor refugees face when seeking access to the education system in Germany. After the first step had been made with the help of a social worker – JOG has become a self-organization of minor refugees and unaccompanied minors. Kanalan writes:

> "According to the premise 'We are experts on our own cause and have our own voice', the JOG members have managed to be heard more and more by politicians – and not only by the interior ministry but also by education, labour and social policy representatives. Meanwhile they have been operating with different forms of action." (Kanalan 2015).

3 Culture is a battlefield

When it comes to the academy as an institution and historical construction, it is striking to see the difference in treatment of the – mainly European – refugees after World War II, when the asylum legislation was created to account for them, and today's refugees – predominantly coming from formerly colonialized countries. While we may acknowledge that knowledge is situated, as poststructuralist and postcolonial critique suggests, we have not really begun to come to terms with the implications of this critique.

This "imagined other", while being victim of wars, conflicts and increasing segregation, has not evolved out of the blue. The matrix is the current world order as determined by coloniality (Quijano 2000/ Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015) and the manifold crises of the Anthropocene. Louis Seukwa (2016: 13) writes:

> "A closer look at the diegesis discloses an immense chasm between the order of the practice, which is grounded on an instrumental rationality, a kind of reptile intelligence manifested throughout the world in the guise of predator behaviour – precisely colonialism and its corollaries as genocides, epistemicides, zombification of humans – and on the other side the order of discourses resting upon normativities such as human rights, democracy, etc. and functioning as the rationalization of inhuman doings in the arrangement of the practice."[6] (Seukwa 2016:113).

Many of the resulting conflicts are also played out in the field of culture. A quite visible struggle is the one for the restitution of stolen art from Africa, which has been kept and displayed in Europe uncontested until recently. The recent debate focuses on objects of art (viewed through a Western lens) and objects of political and religious representation (for the peoples from which they were stolen) and marks a phase of recognition of the subjectivity of peoples from the Global South and their culture as having a value which does not depend on

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[6] Translation by the author of this text.

its measuring by the colonizers (Sarr/ Savoy 2018). It also touches upon the struggle related to who has the right to define art and "high culture" – be it in on stage or in museums.

There is no purely cultural sphere devoid of (political) power. Cultural studies in their Birmingham School variant (Marchart 2018) have made this very clear. With their help, we have come to understand the struggles in the field of culture resulting in material positions in society and material wealth or poverty, inclusion and exclusion, and segregation – also in terms of space and access. The struggles for (cultural) recognition parallel struggles for access and material resources.

The move towards allowing criticism of the colonialist perspective and self-reflection on and shaking up of the premises of modernity has been the agenda of the present in science as well as in art and culture. We can also view the resistance against the unsettling of this Eurocentric universe, a longing for clarity and putting an end to reflexivity and relativity, and the desire to become more exclusive again and adhere to the principles of higher education, as a formation and maintaining of elites. The reflective and de-constructive approach is not easily upheld, and its complexity as well as the need to reflect on privileges and in/ exclusion are not easily supported in midst of a centuries-old Eurocentric and colonialist narrative. G. Spivak writes:

> "The most pernicious presupposition today is that globalization has happily happened in every aspect of our lives. Globalization can never happen to the sensory equipment of the being except insofar as it always was implicit in its vanishing outlines. Only an aesthetic education can continue to prepare us for this, thinking an uneven and only apparently accessible contemporaneity that can no longer be interpreted by such nice polarities as modernity/ tradition, colonial/ post-colonial." (Spivak: 2010:3).

4   Reverse Anthropology as a lens to understand current debates

Reverse Anthropology is an approach to filmmaking and research which Manthia Diawara, professor at the *New York University Tisch School of the Arts*, coined in his film "Rouch in Reverse" (Diawara 2010 b). In film and in writing, Diawara sets out to reverse the colonial and neo-colonial perspective on the African continent and Africans. He writes (2010 a, 201-202):

> "Anyone not making world cinema is out of the place in Cannes or Berlin – unless, that is, they are American. […] An African filmmaker cannot draw on the same readiness to believe in her or his films. [...] They personally know the outstanding directors of our time. But they come from Africa – and Africa is the Other, the location of the non-I, the opposite of everything 'we' do here. In the films of *AFRICAN SCREENS,* Africa becomes an I. It is only then, as Edouard Glissant said, that Africa can enter into an exchange with others and experience changes without becoming distanced form its own inner nature and destroying itself."

Manthia Diawara's approach of Reverse Anthropology and the latest take on perceiving culture by G. Spivak in "An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization" have offered an approach for coming to terms with the current situation in which migration is becoming both normative and exceptional. While domestic policies of many current societies focus on debates about migration, the reversal of an anthropological approach within the frame of a capitalist modernity shows us the possibility of a complete reversal of the existing order and suggests an end to binary logic.

Based on Èdouard Glissant, Manthia Diawara expands the idea of "reversing", e.g. the work of the anthropologist Jean Rouch (Diawara 2010), so as to overcome the "longing to divide us into diversities which threaten each other and which deprecate us of our differences and of every sense for the poetic and imaginary. The spark of truth and reality must not be thought in isolation of the darkness and opacity, of which it stepped out." (Diawara 2017).

So the idea of a Reverse Anthropology – taken further to a "Tout-Monde" – means a commitment to difference, entanglement and complexity.

On an everyday basis, the figure of the refugee reflects the intrusion of this complexity into the seemingly orderly cosmos of a citizen in the Global North. And it is important to take another look at the construction of this figure and not the reality of a migrant/refugee. De-centering the common discourse – whether in film or text – means to de-stabilize the image which is the established common ground.

While we can see with the argument of Homi Bhaba that "mimicry" undermines the authority of the colonizer and the objectification of the colonized (Bhaba 2006), we can also observe the cracks in the current perception and discourses. These cracks and blind spots are illuminated by the practice of the Reverse Anthropology – in art and culture as well as in science.

Some of the protagonists of this "illumination" of cracks and blind spots in Germany can currently be found in the cultural sphere. Not only did many representatives of this sphere express their solidarity with the Refugee Struggle, many refugees and migrants are themselves protagonists of this change. Examples include the "academy of autodidacts" (akademie der autodidakten) in the first "post-migrant" theatre (Ballhaus 2018) in Germany, the Maxim Gorki theatre[7] and the Hebbel Theater am Ufer, all in Berlin. In the "academy of autodidacts", especially "PoC or people with a migrant or post-migrant background" were encouraged to engage. The "focus was to bring the post-migrant community on a representative level in the art scene and to strengthen them and to create a space where their works would be shown, to create visibility", says Veronika Gerhard, the former manager of the "academy of autodidacts", and continues:

> "It is still difficult for me that we find ourselves in the theatre as an institution, which is structured extremely hierarchically. The experimental approach, which we claim, can only be realised to a certain degree. At some point, the often harsh reality comes in – and of course this influences our common work." [8](Gerhard 2018: 253).

The readiness to break with the routine and to rebel against the premises of an exclusive world view, the European imagination, could be perceived with the protagonists of "Youth Without Borders" and those of the "academy of autodidacts" of the "post-migrant theatre". Not only is the subjectivity of migrant youths and unaccompanied minors usually excluded from cultural representation in Europe, but refugees and more so unaccompanied minors are also economically at the margins of European societies. And as marginalized youngsters, they are without a voice, since they do not have access to education and cultural self-expression.

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[7] The Ballhaus Naunystraße as the "first post-migrant" theatre opened in 2008 with Shermin Langhoff as director, in 2013 she then became co-director of the Maxim Gorki theatre and took some of the company with her.
[8] Translation by the author of this text.

They simply lack the space for self-expression, being obliged to win their asylum case – often taking jobs, which are unwanted because of the low pay and hard work, and feeling obliged to their family that had to stay behind. While still in the process of growing up, they are already subjected to many constraints and threats. Often they have experienced trauma, and the arrival in Germany does not give them any rest or relief because the struggle for asylum and to find a place in society is consuming all their strength. Growing racism and segregation in Germany and Europe as a whole put an additional strain on young refugees.

Cultural expression and self-assertion by cultural means becomes a precious luxury in this situation. But it can also serve as an exit strategy and voice option in potentially suffocating circumstances – as the film "Neukölln Unlimited" (Imondi/ Ratsch 2010), for example, displays.

We can currently observe that this youth (sub-)culture is part of the break in the perception of culture and its representation – just as other youth cultures have effected changes in the past with provocative stances (Treptow 2018: 88).

5   The Third Space – acknowledging and allowing difference

But what does this mean for social educational and cultural work with unaccompanied minors? If these approaches go against the routine of accessible offers and established codes, in which way can spaces be provided that allow for the self-expression and subjectivity of minor refugees and migrants? And how can these spaces become a common space for all kinds of different identities of youths, such as different gender identities, different cultural backgrounds and different senses of belonging?

And how can the acclaimed complexity according to the concept of Manthia Diawara be reflected in social cultural work with unaccompanied minors?

The concept of a "third space" (Bhaba 1994) appears as a blueprint suitable for this ambition.

Bhaba writes:

> "Cultural difference, as a form of intervention, participates in a logic of supplementary subversion similar to the strategies of minority discourse. The question of cultural difference faces us with a disposition of knowledges or a distribution of practices that exist beside each other, Abseits designating a form of social contradiction or antagonism that has to be negotiated rather than sublated. The difference between disjunctive sites and representations of social life have to be articulated without surmounting the incommensurable meanings and judgements that are produced within the process of transcultural negotiation." (Bhaba 1994: 161).

The idea was to create a "third space" where the different positions of the youngsters, the students and the lecturers could come together on the basis of acknowledging difference but finding a common ground to start to work from.

Again the formula of Louis Seukwa could serve as a summary of the overall approach:

"It holds as supreme maxim in art- and culture-related education with refugees to not repeat the experience of violence that these people have already experienced by means of an instructive and deficit-orientated pedagogy. Because an authoritarian pedagogy, which ignores the aesthetic sensitivity of refugees and symbolically outclasses and disesteems it,

does not place it at the centre of the education process, is not only pedagogically counterproductive, but also has an estranging effect on the subjects of this pedagogy in hindering circumstances[9] (Seukwa 117).”

The other maxim of the project was to create a “third space” with a clear hierarchy: the migrant perspective on the receiving society would be at its centre and not vice versa. In this way, we wanted to counter the experience of having to justify and explain oneself constantly as someone perceived as the “other”. The aim was to create room for complexity according to Manthia Diawara’s principles of a Reverse Anthropology.

6   Lessons from the practice of Social Cultural Work

The project on which I want to reflect in this text was founded in the wake of the so called “summer of migration” in Germany. “Video Messages from Exile – or what is this place I find myself in now?” was designed according to the principles of Reverse Anthropology and adhered to the general principles of social cultural work with youths (for example: Treptow 2018; Josties & Menrath 2018; Mädler 2008).

The project was launched in 2016 at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in alliance with the social work organisation evin e.V. for unaccompanied minors in Berlin. While evin e.V. had been working with unaccompanied minor refugees for almost 20 years at the time, there were not many social work organisations with this kind of experience and knowledge or with a critically ambitious approach and a leadership and founding figures who had made the experience of flight themselves.

In 2016 – after the so-called “summer of migration” – unaccompanied minors and students of social work were invited to come together with the aim of creating a third space to allow for the expression of the perspective of the youngsters, facilitating the production of videos from this position. For this approach to be realised, the composition of the lecturer’s team was key: two out of four had fled or migrated themselves. Three out of four were women. As a computer expert and trainer for open source tools, one female lecturer quickly became a role model for students and youngsters alike, while challenging perceptions about women and refugees. But due to her many tasks and engagements, she had to leave the project after some time. Richard Djimeli, a filmmaker and actor from Cameroon and himself also a political activist for democratic change in Cameroon, is with the project until today. He writes in a joint article[10] on the project:

> “My perspective is initially one of an African filmmaker and migrant in Europe. I therefore aim to approximate myself to this double reality by using historical and actual references to link questions of the orientation of social work with questions of migration and the capitalist and imperialist conditions. I view the collaboration of students and lecturers with very different backgrounds working with academic research and videos as a way to discover and express different and potentially contrasting realities […]” (Hemberger, Djimeli & Plöger 2017)[11].

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[9] Translation by the author of this text.
[10] Hemberger, U. & Djimeli, R. & Plöger, A. (2017). Lehre im Exil – Austausch und Kooperation im Projektseminar (Teil II). Alice Magazin, Wintersemester 2017/8 (pp. 51-52). https://www.ash-berlin.eu/fileadmin/Daten/alice-Magazin/2017/alice_34_Web.pdf
[11] Translation by the author of this text.

This perspective in the end proved to be essential for creating a "third space" and a common ground. And it served to confuse pre-fabricated images one had in mind about roles and identities, facilitating a deeper understanding of globalisation and coloniality.

The project was also based on concepts of video/media activism (for example: Downing 1984; Harding 1998; Coyer 2005; Fuchs 2014; World Forum of Free Media 2015). There were not many premises except for some of the lessons adopted from the academy of autodidacts and the concept of "critically ambitious" (Gebrande, Melter & Bliemetsrieder 2017) or simply "critical" (Müller at al 2016) social work with refugees.

The following remarks and conclusions are based on observations of the project that has now lasted three years. A study with interviews and group discussions will hopefully be possible in the future, but so far most of our scarce resources were needed to establish and maintain the project. Nevertheless, some of the observations on which I draw here can give an insight into the potentials, the pitfalls and also the challenges of such projects.

7   Precarity as an obstacle and a (shared) theme

While many students and partly also the lecturers expected that the project could prepare the ground for the treatment of stories of flight, discrimination and the difficulty of the asylum process, what indeed happened was something else: First, we found that the precarious life of the newcomers and, to a lesser extent, also the precarity in the lives of the students and lecturers today made personal meetings extremely difficult. In the wake of 2015, when the machinery of social work organisations – many of them semi-private and in competition rather than in coordination with each other – finally started to work, there was no access to schools and German classes anywhere near the place in which the minors found shelter. Furthermore, only social work organisations which were ready to set up structures virtually overnight won the contracts, which often meant that the least professional ones got the biggest contracts.[12] In Berlin, the "LAGeSo" (Landesamt für Gesundheit und Soziales, State Office for Health and Social Affairs) became a synonym of the excessive demand, virtually leading to the collapse of public authorities.

We also found that the precarious life of newcomers seeking asylum in Germany makes stable relationships and a long-term engagement almost impossible. Also, two out of four lecturers shared the experience of having to seek asylum in Germany, and with their political engagement in their countries of origin it was not possible for them to participate all the time.

Another experience which we did not anticipate as lecturers was that the life of many students of social work today in Berlin – with its skyrocketing rent prices and low-wage jobs as well as long distances and the migration/flight experience of many of the students – paralleled the

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[12] A prominent example of this policy was the employment of a big social work contractor – at that time named PeWoBe (Professional Residence and Care Society) - being one of the biggest contractors for shelters in 2015. The PeWoBe won contracts from the federal state of Berlin in some instances without officially applying and was also part of various scandals and investigations around their low standards of social work, financial irregularities and also the involvement of a former extreme right wing party representative as the head of a big shelter and an authorised representative of the company. Although the general manager of the company, Helmut Penz, is notorious for pressing value out of social work organisations and shelters at the cost of the inhabitants and clients since the 1990s, the federal state of Berlin made him one of the biggest contractors in 2015 and afterwards.

situation of the newcomers more than expected. It was easy to identify common experiences like being exhausted with daily life, not finding rest and struggling hard.

This also led to the problem of coming together – physically and mentally – and to even start working together. After experimenting with different formats of common work, we finally realised that we had to leave the city for a long weekend in a space without many distractions in order to really get to know each other. The first trip finally prompted a joint process in which many videos were made, friendships began and some participants (youngsters and students) themselves became lecturers and trainers in this field.

8   Coming together (in a third space)

A third space evolved almost automatically when there was actually the chance to spend time together without the interruption of the daily routine and when there was time to build trust and to bond. This space then became a frame for artistic articulation. Recording and acting in videos served as a catalyst – in again unexpected ways. Through enactment and recording, potentially traumatic experiences can become more manageable – as we can learn from the Testimony Video approach by Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman (1992). Concerning this project, however, the youngsters chose a more playful approach and went from comedy to enacting nightmares which appear manageable by daylight.

In this third space of different and common experiences and identities, the role of the expert could also alternate. While some participants felt insecure when there was analytic talk, they became leaders when it came to acting in front of the camera. The same happened with the expertise in social media, where clearly three of the four lecturers were lagging behind the knowledge and expertise of youngsters and students alike.

What we found to be most valuable was creating and upholding this third space as a sphere of encounter and a free space for enactment without the boundaries experienced in daily life and with frequent role transitions and common experiences to treasure. As mentioned above, the condition sine qua non was that the team of lecturers represented the different positions of the participants – unaccompanied minors and also students who had themselves experienced migration.

It was frequently questioned whether this was not more about friendship than about professional social work, a question which could not be fully resolved. But for the moment, this informal frame meant freedom and bonding and a break from the daily struggles. On our joint trips, we profited from this informality and the unclear mandate. We did set some rules, but were generally free to concentrate on a common creative process in which the perceptions and ideas of the youngsters were at the centre and in which they were allowed the space they wanted for expressing them in acting and filming.

9   Adjusting the lens and reversing the perspectives

Reverse Anthropology in our approach was meant to reverse the gaze from those newly arriving in Germany and being demanded to justify themselves to the ones living here, who often take their position and perspectives for granted . As Manthia Diawara shows in his short film "Rouch in Reverse" (2010b), there is no common ground which can be taken for granted, and especially video and film can be used for adjusting the lens and reversing the

perspectives. Racist and sexist assumptions can be challenged in this way and the de-colonization of the imaginary[13] can be approached.

But this is not an easy task. As Farah Melter (2017) points out, there needs to be constant (self-)reflection of all the participants (foremost the lecturers) and a training for lecturers and participants alike, if a space in which sexist and racist stereotypes are not re-enacted is to be created. Reflection and a lesson with the aforementioned author as well as with a founding member of JOG were part of our program and proved to be very valuable.

It was mainly because of the diversity in our group, the established common ground and the discrimination sensitivity training that we were able to open up to the dynamics of the process: to "we" and "the others" becoming blurry and the insecurity that goes with it. Categories evolved and were dismissed. Identity became a questionable category for students, minors and teachers alike – as was stated in the feedback rounds which we regularly conducted. Furthermore, the role as future social workers was at stake and its implications were questioned by the students. What also evolved was a group of those who engaged strongly in the project – a group of youngsters and students who were interested in proceeding with this kind of work. And conflicts occurred around the many tasks which need to be carried out in preparation for a workshop weekend and the raising of funds. In retrospective, our aims were very – maybe too – ambitious, and the resources very – maybe too – scarce.

Roles quickly changed in this regard, as well: some found pleasure in acting before the camera and retreated from other tasks, some were satisfied with authoring videos, while others were more interested in the (media) pedagogical aspects of this approach of social cultural work. In the end, a core group of those who are continuing to work or further their education in one of these fields evolved – also from all the participants, youngsters and students alike.

10   Representation and participation

The notion of "critically ambitious social work" (Gebrande & Melter & Bliemetsrieder 2017) became clear to us during this project and could answer some of the questions related to the professional stance of social workers. This is also reflected in the experience of "Youth Without Borders". Ibrahim Kanalan writes about a founder of the Beratungs- und Betreuungszentrum für junge Flüchtlinge und Migranten BBZ (Counselling and Caring Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants) which became the nucleus of Youth Without Borders:

> "If the social worker [...] – himself formerly a refugee in Germany – had only given us legal advice like most other helpdesks, we could all three have gone home and capitulated to our fate. But this social worker motivated us to stand up for our rights and to struggle to get them." (Kanalan: 2015).

Refugees and migrants from the Global South (which corresponds with the map of colonialization) usually have to experience a substantial devaluation of their certificates and academic degrees. The knowledge they gained in their countries of origin does not count

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[13] "The challenge is to create a new language, a new semantic actually, to talk about these things. The moment we create a new semantic, we will be able to speak properly. Right now, we can't speak. Let's say that a bad writer, someone who really can't write, has to make a living by writing about Darfur. He will use the formula just because he can't write, and the formula will polarize the story, and those who read will conclude that this is what's going on. In the end, he creates even more harm." (Bekolo in an interview with Adesokan 2008).

equally in the European Union, so it is very unlikely for them to reach a level of employment where they can determine policies and programs. Therefore, desperately needed role models are hard to find – in practice and in the academy. Our case – having a diverse team of lecturers – is rare until now.

For the youngsters, this means that a generation of newcomers is being trained, but they might not make it to the management level of social work institutions and often do not see their perspective represented even when dealing with clients from the same region or country. The same mechanism applies to the academy itself, where the notion that knowledge is situated is now widely accepted, but equal representation of its exponents is lacking. The competition for positions in the academy is fierce and only those with a straight academic record reach the level of becoming professors and researchers. This applies much more to women who are also refugees and have children to care for. For the lecturers and political activists, this means that their knowledge is rarely given recognition and space in practice and even less so in the academy. For the students, this means that they are not given information and inputs which would enable them to fully understand their role and position in a globalized world which is shaped by coloniality.

11   Conclusions

While a lot of similar programs to the ones described above are still running or being created, the general climate in society has profoundly changed since the "summer of migration". The so called "welcoming culture" is less visible than the mobilizations of PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident) and the election victories by the recently formed AfD (Alternative for Germany). Many of the supporters of the Refugee Struggle have moved on to other topics. The selection of a very few countries from which refugees are generally entitled to asylum in Germany has also led to divisions of the Struggle and among its protagonists, as has the disappointment with the betrayal in the talks with authorities when ending the occupation of the former centre of the Struggle "Oranienplatz" in Berlin.

The cultural sphere still gives space to the articulation of the positions of newcomers, but the access to it remains difficult as does the access to the academy. What often remains hidden is the structure of coloniality and the situatedness of knowledge in the Eurocentric cosmos. And this is even more relevant when looking at education and pedagogy in general. Louis Seukwa therefore demands adopting a "transnational perspective" in "pedagogical practice" which deals "with the consequences of global inequality for education processes" and orienting education towards "global solidarity".[14] (Seukwa 118).

In this way, the aim of an inclusive and participatory education approach has to rest upon an education towards global solidarity and create an understanding of the continuing effects and mechanisms of coloniality. The cultural sphere can be an experimental space for the testing of this approach. Academia should open up to the knowledge and stance of educators with different backgrounds and perspectives in order to make this happen.

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[14] Translation by the author of this text.

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