EUROPE... ISLAND FULL OF NOISES

THE CITY GHETTOS OF TODAY
- Exploring the memory and the present-day reality of migrant communities in the European cities
At the heart of the project The City Ghettos of Today was a desire to redefine and reexamine the concept ‘ghetto’ in the context of today’s closed migrant districts. Through artistic creation and sociological research, we aimed to create a space in which we could examine and discuss the multiple stories emanating from Europe’s migrant ‘ghettos’. How do we talk about ‘ghettos’ today? Is it possible – or even necessary – to redefine the word in a manner that more accurately reflects the multiple realities that constitute to our contemporary urban landscapes? What role do ‘ghettos’ play in constructing a European identity? What factors contribute to the phenomena of ‘ghettoization’ in contemporary Europe? What are the dynamics that contribute to the implantation of migrant communities throughout Europe today and how do they connect to the collective memory of Europe’s past?

The City Ghettos of Today entailed a series of workshops open to local communities in various European cities – Warsaw, Paris, Bologna, Milan, Helsinki, Berlin and Antwerp. Run by artists and cultural actors, each workshop installment concluded with an art installation and a public debate on the project’s themes in each of the cities listed above. This European collaboration concluded in February 2015 with a large-scale installation-performance and a debate that brought together materials culled from each of the participating city workshops. The project united artists, cultural actors, academics and social workers in order to explore the broad themes of ‘ghetto’ and ‘migration districts’ in participating European cities. The City Ghettos of Today reflected the interdisciplinary dimension of the Strefa WolnoSłowa foundation, which combines academic and theoretical methodologies with practices of artistic and cultural creation.
Artistic Inspirations

The City Ghettos of Today project involved the exploration of the city areas with a large immigrant population, where we conducted interviews and later developed artistic workshops using the materials collected in the city.

In addition to the stories collected in the cities, as artistic director I selected literary materials drawn from William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as a starting point for artistic exploration.

Over the following pages, I will attempt to explain the reasons for this choice and our method of creative practice.

We use literary forms and figures as containers or vessels to process the materials drawn from reality.

The characters of Caliban and Prospero, the island where *The Tempest* is set, Prospero’s teaching of language to Caliban and Caliban’s rebellion are all examples of these ‘forms’, ‘vessels’ or ‘labeled boxes’ which we need, as a first step, to process the materials obtained in the interviews.

As an example, during a visit to a park in Nanterre, we conducted interviews and later developed artistic workshops using the materials obtained in the interviews. As a result, we selected the episode of Caliban’s Uprising which is external to reality itself. Moreover, this process departs directly from the stories of the lives of participants. We are freer to judge Caliban in both light and shadow, but also freer to express from behind his mask our own darkest sides and secrets, if so desired, without feeling that nakedness or exposure of talking about ourselves directly or even about others who exist, such as the former student at Nanterre.

Following this method, we are able to make better sense of reality if we can relate it to an object which is external to reality itself. Moreover, this vessel drawn with both broad but precise strokes, in this case a character from a literary masterpiece, allows us to transport it to other contexts because it functions on a more abstract level: in *The City Ghettos of Today* project the characters from *The Tempest* were taken to seven different cities and were loaded with the range of materials uncovered in each city. Thus, a comparative knowledge and experience is drawn from hugely diverse contexts.

Lastly, from a creative perspective, this approach allows reality to be transformed into metaphor and poetry. The process allows materials to adopt a form more able to draw out spectators’ interpretations and more likely to touch those without a direct interest in the specific context where the story began. In our view, art can create a bridge between specific conditions and something more universal. In relation to the subject of the ghetto, for example, what does the ‘ghetto condition’ mean for all of us? Which tools can be used to eradicate it? What light can a specific experience, such as that of an immigrant living on the city’s periphery, throw on our own lives? How can it interrogate our own experiences?

Furthermore, art can create an alternative reality which stands in opposition to that of our daily lives. It can offer to those whose existence is concealed as locked and without choices, the tools to try to create instead another world, an alternative, an escape. We try to counter that which exists or is possible, such as an identity fixed in a biography and conceived as immutable, by creating alternative possibilities through the art of living another world.

A useful practice for reflecting on alternatives to something perceived as unique, unchanging and fixed is the art of rewriting a classic. A classic is the canon, the official version. Rewriting it (as many our participants did with the character of Caliban) means exercising the freedom to find those windows of creativity in a fixed text, with opportunities to express disagreement with its established history and the ability to emphasize those aspects which in the official version remain in the shadows. Evidently, this is merely an exercise in ‘literary’ training but what if we apply it to life?

To find spaces of freedom, windows of creativity, despite being enclosed within a seemingly locked reality which stands in opposition to that of our daily lives.
space or prison, this was the true lesson which I took from The City Ghettos of Today.

During interviews, I talked with those who’ve found their own means of escape from extremely difficult conditions, who’ve developed their own tactics to manage their own personal ghettos. Tactics which are very different from those written in theories or books, or in newspaper analysis. An extremely personal approach that a person can find just from their experience of being ‘at the center of things’ and not looking from above or from a distance.

For this reason, I continued to propose our black pipes as props in our workshop. Because they offered a ‘human-sized’ ghetto within which each student could experiment and experience, as in a game, the dialectical relationship between enclosure and windows, the art of finding ways out where all seems blocked. Ariel, locked inside a tree, teaches us that we can escape through singing. The song becomes so small it can cross a tree, teaches us that we can escape through out where all seems blocked. Ariel, locked inside the sea.

But this development of ways of thinking and seeing possible alternatives has not been the sole focus of our workshops for Apprenticeship intercultural groups? This is the question: what is the crucial experience for those professionals, particularly young people, our central focus of our workshops for the project. There are other aspects to our method by which I want to briefly explore.

When we work with those who are not professionals, particularly young people, our central question is: what is the crucial experience for those participating in our theatre workshops involving intercultural groups?

I believe theatre is more important for those who create it than for those who see it.

As Goethe demonstrates in Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship, theatre can be a particularly powerful experience in those early years of development, helping to nurture young people’s world-views. That’s why in our creative practices we stimulate and underline what I would describe as the experience of a collective convergence towards a concrete and defined field and subject matter.

The performance itself is something concrete established collectively.

To give another example, the school walls which need to be repainted provide the opportunity for a concrete action in which all can converge. Clearing a garden (for example, to transform it into a performance space) can be a concrete action in which group members are all involved. And so we attempt to emphasize cooperation towards a shared result, with distinct contributions from all. Only collectively can we build something of relevance. Work on the performance is thus a process that allows us to experience an alternative to the now-dominant individualistic and hypercompetitive approach.

Through the work of intercultural groups in a range of sites in The City Ghettos of Today project, we are able to construct a model in which the process of creation of the performance is enriched by differences – differences of culture, of life experiences and of points of view. In which differences become something which improves and expands the final result of our work.

For young people, creating a performance can become something exciting, an unforgettable experience. Something that disappears – the performance – now exists. And it is thanks to the contributions of all present that it is greeted with applause.

It is a simple form of political education: to have a shared project that we can improve through our differences.

Another central aspect of our theatrical pedagogy is to use theatre workshops to develop stronger relationships between the participants and the territory. I believe theatrical activities must leave the confines of the theatre building itself.

We aim to develop techniques of listening to territories, techniques of transforming the stories we hear into performances or installations of public art. In each workshop, we try to elaborate different ways of artistically restoring these stories to sites where they were collected. Installations and performances in squares, terraces, on the roofs of houses and on the steps. Parades of bicycles through the streets. Performances in gardens and shops. In every phase of our artistic process we try to involve those using these public spaces.

The central aim is that the members of the group, wherever they are from, learn to recognize the territory of the neighborhood as the subject of their own interventions and something they should nurture. And at the same time, the neighborhood recognizes the group as its own.

Politics is an attempt to give shape to a territory, to make a city our set design and our subject.

To give a further example, when performances or festivals take place in the streets, then the streets and the neighborhoods must be transformed in turn, they must dress themselves up and become more beautiful. The city is thus experienced in a new way. Perhaps, we can once again fall in love with our city. When there is a festival in an area of the city it is for a limited time and so we can propose new or strange or alternative rules. These may gradually provide new ways to discover and relate to the city and the neighborhoods. These places, and the residents may even decide to maintain these changes.

And what about individual talents? Another important concept for us is what I like to call ‘the art of catching flames’.

More generally speaking, based on my work with teenagers in the peripheries of the city, I believe the primary obstacle is the lack of appreciation of their own abilities. The obstacle is this inability to undertake projects and to work on themselves, this lack of perspectives, these negative and destructive feelings. Perhaps I’ve identified these elements as a problem because they are fields in which theatre can contribute something useful (and this should not be underestimated when currently theatre is seemingly less and less useful).

Teatre is not like music. Those who understand how a theatre workshop for teenagers works know that it is possible to find a role and artistic task for almost every participant. To act, to sing, to paint, to sew a costume, to handle technical issues, to skateboard, to research by watching movies and reading – almost anything can be part of the preparation of a performance.

From my own work in the cities, I always remember that surprised expression of a boy who at school is often behind the rest of the class, hearing: ‘Wow, this idea, this music, your gesture is fantastic. We’re going to use it in the show.’

I believe we must cultivate this art of grabbing the moment, of capturing the flame.

We must begin from something that seems like nothing and slowly nurture it. The beginning is a small flame, and if we are not careful ninety per cent of the time we are destined to blow it out. We must learn this art of capturing what a teenager has to offer and begin from there.

We must encourage them to nurture their talent, to encourage this work on themselves to progress and develop. But it is also extremely important for us to connect our theatrical and artistic practices with a vision of the world, by reflecting on the world alongside them. We must build narratives that allow us to connect our small actions with a powerful vision of the world.

We must encourage these teenagers to build and to pass on stories, tales and narratives. The stories can contain a vision of the world. We must train our students to build stories in which they can relate themselves to the real world. We can use literature to do so. To prepare a performance often means dealing with literature and handling stories, which means developing the ability to situate ourselves within a context.

Literature can allow us to propose to our students secular patterns of behavior. To reflect engagingly on characters, choices and destinies can help us to continue the discussion and contribute to filling the huge void that the disintegration of parental authority and previous worldviews have created in younger generations.
In order to lay the groundwork for the Paris edition of *The City Ghettos of Today*, Check Points Theatre Company together with the Museum of Immigration History (le Musée de l’histoire de l’immigration) organized and oversaw a preparatory workshop in artistic research, the overarching objective of which was to elaborate a ‘ghetto dramaturgy’. This workshop brought together a heterogeneous group of participants from a variety of backgrounds (ranging from French and foreign university students (Chile, Colombia, Greece) to migrants from Mali, Algeria, Moldova and Romania. Within the framework of these weekly workshops, participants used their own personal experiences in Paris and fictional texts as the basis for a broader exploration of the theme of ‘ghettos’ in the context of urban Paris. Over the course of this preparatory period, participants compiled a diverse collection of personal traces and texts, historical and sociological documents, literary elements and journalistic material, the compilation of which served as an important resource for the international residency in March 2014 or the project’s second phase. Similarly, this workshop period also enabled participants to explore one of the two neighborhoods that served as case studies for the project’s Parisian residency: the Goutte d’Or in Paris, a neighborhood that is commonly referred to as an ‘inner-city ghetto’. A neighborhood with a long history of European and African emigration, the Goutte d’Or’s popular reputation is largely based on its contradictory status as a ‘cosmopolitan and exotic’ enclave and its reputation as a center for illicit activity (prostitution and drug traffic) and as a closed-in ‘communitarian’ enclave.

Whereas the preparatory workshops enabled participants to explore the Goutte d’Or neighborhood, the second-phase residency of the international artists and researchers concentrated on the Quartier du Parc in Nanterre, a suburb immediately north of Paris that served as the second case study in this Paris-based residency. In this phase of the project, members of the international team met with residents of the Cité Pablo Picasso in particular, an area of Nanterre’s Quartier du Parc neighborhood that is largely known for its ‘cloud towers’ constructed by architect Emile Aillaud in 1977. Commonly labeled as an ‘extra-urban ghetto’, this area is representative of suburban Parisian neighborhoods that have been stigmatized throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. This stigmatizing reputation reached an apex in French popular imagination during the 2005 riots. By exploring this neighborhood through the eyes of its residents, the fieldwork phase of the international residency enabled participants to gain an insider’s perspective on this neighborhood whilst simultaneously examining differences and similarities between popular representations of the area in public arenas. Thanks to Nanterre’s Parc’en ciel Social Center, the international team was able to meet a variety of individuals comprising in the neighborhood’s heterogeneous social sphere including: social workers, educators, young adults in reinsertion, retired individuals, high-school teachers, a former municipal employee, first-generation migrants enrolled in French language courses and retired Algerian migrant workers, all of whom enabled the international group to hear a range of different neighborhood voices.
I decided to stay in France. I like France because of its principles. Liberty, equality, fraternity. These are values that resonate with me. Whether they are being applied or not is another question. As regards the question of integration, I will be honest with you: yes, I am very well-integrated. I am never made to feel like a foreigner and if I were to feel like that, it would be because I am a foreigner and will always be one. Say you were to ask me: ‘Ahmed, you have been in France for so many years, you are well-integrated, your children are French, they grew up here, they were born here, so why haven’t you applied for French citizenship? Here, again, I have another point of view. Why haven’t I applied? For French nationality even though every one has advised me to do so? There are so many advantages that come with citizenship; you have the right to vote you have more of a right to public housing than a foreigner. I, however, don’t believe in any of these things for the simple reason that I am already living in a free country. Now that I am here, I have rights. I refuse to ask for rights to which I am not entitled. I didn’t come here to ask for rights to which I am not entitled.

On the other hand, when I look at French society, I tell myself, ‘Ahmed, if you were to become a French citizen, what would that change? Will people suddenly see you as French? Would the word ‘FRANCE’ suddenly be written on my forehead? Because this face says ‘AHMED’. I can change my name, but this face is North African. Whether that is good or bad is another question but what is clear is that it is a North African face. This label will never disappear. So what would becoming French get me? When I say ‘to be French’ I am talking about becoming a French citizen. That wouldn’t change anything for me. I have my rights, my children are free, they feel good in their skin. I don’t need to be French. If I were to become French it would only be for materialistic reasons. So, no, I would become French to be more well respected but not for materialistic reasons. I am not materialistic. People who do become French are materialistic. They get their French citizenship thinking that they will get advantages: priority hiring, priority for a flat etc. But when all is said and done and they submit their application for a flat, it is the name MOHAMED BENALI that appears. It is the same problem. Citizenship doesn’t change anything. I do not want to take advantage. I decided that I am just fine the way I am: AHMED the Algerian.

Ahmed, Algeria

INTRODUCTION

As the inaugural installation in the trans-European performance project The City Ghettos of Today, the Paris residency heralded the project’s first practical encounter between the Paris-based theatre association Check Points, their workshop participants and the project’s ambulatory group of international artists. This ten-day residency, which took place at Paris’s Museum of Immigration History in the Palais de la Porte Dorée in March 2014, culminated in an installation-performance entitled Caliban’s Voices that was partly inspired by William Shakespeare’s The Tempest. Prior to arrival of the international artistic team and their decision to incorporate Shakespeare’s text into the project, however, local project organizers and voluntary participants from a wide range of cultural and professional backgrounds conducted a series of collaborative workshops and on-the-ground fieldwork in order to develop material for the Paris-based national artistic team as locally sourced material for the Paris-based The City Ghettos of Today installation and performance.

The following article will therefore explore the process through which the Paris-based team, led by Check Points, elaborated a ‘dramaturgy of ‘the ghetto’’ in the weeks prior to the arrival of the international artistic team. It will begin by describing the conceptual foundations that formed the starting point for this process of collective investigation. This text will similarly provide concrete examples of ways in which participants contributed to this ‘dramaturgy of ‘the ghetto’’ over the course of this six-week period. Finally, this text will query the degree to which these practical methods for developing a ‘dramaturgy of ‘the ghetto’’ reflect the conceptual and contextual complexities associated with attempting to identify the relevance of ‘ghettos’ in modern-day France.
**CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS**

The word ‘ghetto’ is a polysemic term. At its base, the word emerged from the Italian ‘geto’, referring to the part of town in which Jewish populations were obligated to reside. Even on this etymological level, however, the meanings abound, as Sandra Debenetti-Stow demonstrates.

The term ‘ghetto’, intentionally and generically referring to a place of obligatory Jewish residence, was perhaps first used in 1562 by Pius IV in his bull, Dumum a felicis. However, as early as 1516, the two spellings ‘geto’ and ‘ghetto’ both appeared in the Venetian text ordering Jews who wished to settle in the city to dwell in a specific area – ‘geto’ being the word used to refer to the metal foundry that had once occupied this same site. Some would see the origin of the term in the Hebrew ‘get’, whose meaning of ‘divorce, or separation’ would see the origin of the term in the Hebrew ‘get’, whose meaning of ‘divorce, or separation’.

The word ‘ghetto’ is a polysemic term. At its outset of the project, the Paris residency was conceptually underpinned by the broad notion of polysemy, specifically as it related to the broad category of ‘ghettos’ in France. The principal objective was therefore to pick apart the word ‘ghetto’ has, over time, accrued layers of meaning that are entangled in this triumvirate of spatial and social associations, whether by reproducing and crystallising common conceptions of what constitutes a ‘ghetto’ or through the evocation of such stereotypes in order to appropriate or transform them. From a noun (a ghetto, ghettoization) to a verb (to ghettoize) to an adjective (it’s ghetto, ghetto-fabulous), the term has taken on a significative fluidity that nevertheless remains tethered to this lexicon of confinement, separation and marginality.

When viewed in the context of Paris today, the semiotic landscape that has nourished popular conceptions of ‘ghettos’ in the collective consciousness of Ile-de-France residents has primarily reproduced these socio-spatial assumptions of confinement, separation and marginality. However, essentializing ideational stereotypes and pejorative associations that have been transmitted through various discursive and audio-visual channels in France’s public sphere over the past fifty years have had an impact on the degree to which the word is evoked in public arenas today. The term ‘ghetto’ has therefore largely fallen into disuse and has subsequently been replaced in public arenas with analogous references to ‘neighbourhoods’ (quartiers), ‘suburbs’ (banlieues) and ‘projects’ or ‘social housing’ (cités), with popular evocations of ‘ghettos’ being limited to references to ghettoisation, or the passive process through which areas ‘become transformed into’ enclosed minority districts. References to these areas in the public sphere primarily – though not exclusively – identify suburban areas outside of the Paris city centre (banlieues) that, in addition to being marginalized spatially, are equally characterized by socio-economic marginality, as well. In many cases, these suburban banlieues were historically reception districts for rotating cycles of migrant labourers, a large percentage of which had emigrated from countries in North and West Africa that had colonial ties to the French Republic.

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From the outset of the project, the Paris residency was conceptually underpinned by the broad notion of polysemy, specifically as it related to the broad category of ‘ghettos’ in France. The principal objective was therefore to pick apart the word ‘ghetto’ has, over time, accrued layers of meaning that have, over the years, become inter-twined with popular and subjective understandings of ‘ghettos’ in Paris today. In order to ground this process more firmly within the contextual soil of Paris, project organisers identified two neighbourhoods that they saw as having been shaped in part by popular representations of ‘ghettos’ in public arenas: the Goutte d’Or neighbourhood in Paris’s eighteenth arrondissement and the suburb of Nanterre, a located just beyond Paris’s financial district at La Défense to the north-west of the city.

The aim in incorporating these two examples was twofold first, to provide concrete neighbourhoods in which project participants could base their individual and collective reflections on ‘ghettos’ in the Ile-de-France region. Second, to enable participants to compare two neighbourhoods that had been similarly singled out by popular discourses on ‘ghettos’ in the Ile-de-France region – one within the Parisian city limits and one outside of the city centre – in order to nurture more nuanced reflections on the broad problematic of ‘ghettos’ and their relevance to modern-day Paris. Since the present article’s focus is upon the preparatory period leading up the installation, however, the present analysis will only evoke the Goutte d’Or, which served as the starting-point for workshop activities leading up to the installation. Actions involving Nanterre did not begin until the project’s ten-day residency with the international artistic team at the Porte Dorée in March 2014.

**NO/S GHETTOS**

Before the arrival of The City Ghettos of Today’s artistic team, Check Points ran a preparatory workshop for a six-week period with a diverse group of participants who would later become an integral part of the project team during the ten-day residency at the Museum of Immigration History. The workshop title was No/s Ghettos (No Ghettos/Our Ghettos), which was a play on words intended to both reject the stigmatising associations bound up with the broad notion of ‘ghettos’ and to highlight the project’s objective to appropriate such associations and to transform them through the subjective gaze of the workshop participants. The principal aim of this preparatory workshop was to create a collection of dramaturgical ‘traces’ that would both initiate the international artistic group to the specific problems underpinning evocations of the term ‘ghetto’ in Paris today and would provide them with a wealth of material from which they could draw inspiration in the creation of the final installation-performance.
In the final months of 2013, the call for participation was diffusé through a number of channels, including socio-cultural associations and local urban policy bureaus in the eighteenth arrondissement, local youth organisations in and around the Goutte d’Or and the Drama Department of the Université Paris VIII in the northern suburb of St Denis, the latter institution having already been implicated as a partner in The City Ghettos of Today project. The resulting group came to the project through two of these intermediary institutions: the Université Paris VIII and the socio-educative association Atouts Cours, which provides French-language instruction to migrants individuals residing in the Paris metro area and with whom the company Check Points already had professional ties. Indeed, all participants having come to the project by way of Atouts Cours were already enrolled in an evening theatre workshops run by Check Points members and came to the project through two of these intermediary institutions: the Université Paris VIII and the socio-educative association Atouts Cours, which provides French-language instruction to migrants individuals residing in the Paris metro area and with whom the company Check Points already had professional ties. Indeed, all participants having come to the project by way of Atouts Cours were already enrolled in an evening theatre workshops run by Check Points members and came to the project through two of these intermediary institutions: the Université Paris VIII and the socio-educative association Atouts Cours, which provides French-language instruction to migrants individuals residing in the Paris metro area and with whom the company Check Points already had professional ties. Indeed, all participants having come to the project by way of Atouts Cours were already enrolled in an evening theatre workshops run by Check Points members and came to the project through two of these intermediary institutions: the Université Paris VIII and the socio-educative association Atouts Cours, which provides French-language instruction to migrants individuals residing in the Paris metro area and with whom the company Check Points already had professional ties. Indeed, all participants having come to the project by way of Atouts Cours were already enrolled in an evening theatre workshops run by Check Points members and came to the project through two of these intermediary institutions: the Université Paris VIII and the socio-educative association Atouts Cours, which provides French-language instruction to migrants individuals residing in the Paris metro area and with whom the company Check Points already had professional ties. Indeed, all participants having come to the project by way of Atouts Cours were already enrolled in an evening workshop, took place at the Centquatre’s studios dedicated to amateur groups and associations based in the eighteenth and nineteenth arrondissements, known as the Cinq, was structured around three principal activities: private definitions of the term ‘ghetto’, group improvisation and presentations based upon texts and images pre-selected by Check Points members, and a group discussion that used the word ‘ghetto’ as the basis for a collective process of free association. Intervened with practical theatre exercises, this initial workshop provided the conceptual and practical framework within which aspiring participants would subsequently develop a ‘dramaturgy of the ghetto’ in subsequent weeks.

In order to reinforce the underlying theme of ‘polysemy’ as is relates to contemporary conceptions of ‘ghettos’ in France, ensuing workshops placed a strong emphasis upon the collection, interpretation and creation of ‘traces’. These traces took a number of different forms, ranging from the tangible (textual, audio-visual traces, photographs) to the intangible (memories, impressions, feelings), with an emphasis placed on transforming the latter into the former through workshop exercises and individual work outside of these collective sessions. These ‘traces’ emerged in part through the weekly workshop sessions, but were largely realized as ‘homework’ on the participants’ own time. Indeed, over the course of the No/s Ghettos preparatory workshops, participants were asked to undertake fieldwork excursions on their own time in parallel to these weekly sessions to the Goutte d’Or and to other Parisian neighbourhoods that emerged in collective discussions about ‘ghettos’ in Paris. Following these fieldwork excursions, participants were asked to create a ‘trace’ of the experience in a manner of their choosing.

Specific examples of ‘traces’ that emerged of the course of the six-week workshop included texts based on personal memories, stop-motion videos of so-called ‘personal ghettos’ in one participant’s apartment, and photographs of the Goutte d’Or taken by residents and passers-by in the neighbourhood with a disposable black and white camera. During a collective group outing to the Goutte d’Or, some group members initiated in a ‘blind’ walk during which two participants blindfolded a third and led them through the streets, which enabled the latter to experience the neighbourhood through his or her remaining senses. The resultant ‘trace’ that was produced was a digital recording of the ‘blind’ perambulator’s reactions to the sounds, smells and sensations of the Goutte d’Or.

On a broad level, the motivation behind this exercise was to encourage the participants to cast a subjective eye on Parisian neighbourhoods in order to form and articulate personal associations with the neighbourhoods under investigation in this project that they could subsequently add to their growing collection of dramaturgical ‘traces’.

On another level, this exercise encouraged participants to identify and exercise their preconceptions regarding such areas in a conscious, creative way and to attempt to see these areas in a new light. By attempting to create more self-conscious and personal associations with the Goutte d’Or and similar Parisian neighbourhoods, this fieldwork exercise intended to create a humanizing counter-point to the stigmatising and dehumanizing representations of these areas that have populated French – and specifically Paris-based – public arenas.

Alongside these ‘fieldwork traces’, participants also created material in response to pre-selected textual and visual traces provided by Check Points workshop organisers. While some such texts had previously been used by Check Points members as theoretical references during the elaboration of the project, such as Ahmed Djouder’s Désin- tègration and Didier Lapeyronnie’s Ghetto urbain. Ségur, violence et pauvreté en France aujourd’hui, these textual traces were equally supplemented with literary references, newspaper articles, photos, lyrics and other references to both ‘ghettos’ and the ‘Goutte d’Or’ in broad terms. These ‘traces’ were then appropriated and transformed in a number of ways. As part of the practical component of these workshops, these ‘traces’ served as the textual bases for theatre exercises and group improvisations.

They equally provided new material with which participants could create their own ‘traces’. In the latter case, Check Point members organized exercises in which half of the participants would read the texts aloud in a group and then would ask the remaining half to record words and phrases that they were able to hear amidst this cacophony of voices. The group would then reassemble and improvise a theatrical scene, with the remaining participants subsequently cast a subjective eye on Parisian neighbourhoods in order to form and articulate personal associations with the neighbourhoods under investigation in this project that they could subsequently add to their growing collection of dramaturgical ‘traces’.

In another exercise, Check Point members photocopied and cut individual words out of these pre-selected texts and placed them in a paper bag alongside another containing pre-selected images. After dividing the participants into groups, they asked a member of each group to blindly select one word and one image, which would then form the basis of a short improvisational scene.

In a practical way, these activities aimed to broaden the repertoire of ‘dramaturgical traces’ that the Paris workshop participants intended to present to the international artistic team during the residency. However, they were more specifically intended to underline the subjective and semiotic web of influences that continuously – and spontaneously – shape interpretations of
the notion of ‘ghetto’ in France. This conscious layering of meanings may, on one level, be seen as a theatrical attempt to represent the focus on polysemy that lies at the heart of the team’s explorations of what the term ‘ghetto’ evokes in the context of modern-day France. When viewed as the introduction to a trans-European project devoted to the broad theme of ‘ghettos’, however, these trace-based exercises also arguably highlight the recurrent meanings and associations that may conceivably link Parisian ‘ghettos’ to areas in other national contexts whilst simultaneously underlining the contextual specificity of the historical and semiotic landscapes that shape perceptions of ‘ghettos’ in France today.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By prioritizing activities and materials intended to highlight the multiplicity of meanings that are bound up with the term ‘ghetto’ in a Parisian context, the Na’s Ghetto preparatory workshops placed the problematics of perception at the centre of their evolution of a ‘dramaturgy of «the ghetto»’. These problematics were exposed and highlighted by the collection of multiform ‘traces’ over the course of the workshop, each of which provided one response to the question ‘What does the word «ghetto» mean in France today?’. The resulting collection of ‘traces’ thus constituted the cacophony of individual voices reunited as a whole that may arguably be understood to reflect France’s modern-day, multicultural social world. This approach was a conscious attempt to avoid falling into the minefield of stereotypes that are commonly associated with the term in order to prevent the reproduction and transmission of such stereotypes within the workshops and, later, in the project’s culminating installation-performance.

However, the workshop’s emphasis on the subjective, combined with a lack of durable pedagogical support, meant that these explorations were limited in their scope and impressions of these themes and neighbourhoods rarely extended beyond the individual experiences of workshop participants. In the first instance, the workshop’s emphasis on the subjective was predominately the result of a lack of entry points into the Goutte d’Or, the neighbourhood that was intended to serve as a case study for this preparatory workshop. As well as constituting the principal reason for the neighbourhood’s omission from the final installation-performance, this predominately ‘external’ perspective on the neighbourhood reduced participant ‘fieldwork traces’ to superficial observations that did little to dispel stereotypes or to provide nuanced insight into such areas. By the same token, the limited six-week workshop period and the extra-curricular nature of these workshops meant that more in-depth research into these areas, their history and the broader problematics had to be undertaken independently by participants at their own volition. Given their work and course loads, this ‘sociological complement’ to the theatre research was an ambitious and ultimately unattainable goal.

Indeed, the question of whether it is possible to create a ‘dramaturgy of «the ghetto»’ in six weekly two-hour sessions that avoids stereotypes and superficial explorations of the subject in a six-week period is one that must ultimately be met with a resounding ‘no’. Moreover, the arrival of the international team and subsequent focus on The Tempest meant that much of the dramatical material that had been accrued during these workshops was unused or adapted to correspond with this new Shakespearean lens and, due to difficulties in establishing ties with partners in the Goutte d’Or, the neighbourhood was omitted completely from the second international phase of the Paris residency. However, the workshop attempts to understand the problematics of perspective through the collection of traces nevertheless points to a conscious desire to unearth and expose the individual voices behind ‘ghetto’ stereotypes. When viewed against the trans-European backdrop of The City Ghetto of Today project, this ambitious small-scale effort nevertheless constitutes a more large-scale first step towards creating a ‘European community’ that recognizes the subjective experiences of its minority populations and reflects the multicultural realities of a modern-day Europe.
First of all, I would like to make it clear that I wasn’t teaching ‘Calibans’ in the neighborhood. By this I mean that I wasn’t a colonialist teacher whose goal was to brainwash slaves. That being said, the language issues that this excerpt raises are fundamental ones. For the appropriation of language to occur and, more broadly, for the appropriation of what we can refer to as ‘culture’ – which we can define here as the common values that enable us to live together within a society – it is necessary for these things to have meaning. And ‘meaning’ for a young person – very young given that I have been working with middle schoolers for twenty years – means being able to see yourself in the future. I think that my biggest difficulty as a teacher was that not all of these kids had a sufficiently clear vision of their future. As a result, they couldn’t see a place for this culture or, to be more precise, for the literature that I was trying to transmit to them as a teacher of French literature. Many of them already considered their futures to be ruined in advance, somehow, because many of them had been struggling scholastically since primary school. Others saw no future for themselves because in their families they had examples of brothers or sisters and cousins who had studied and had ended up unemployed anyway. From this perspective, it is easy to see why they would ask themselves – why should we learn? What is the point of learning anything? – I believe that this is something that is really hard for them; much harder for them than for their teachers, obviously. Obviously Caliban understood very well what that gave his master his power and his total domination was that he possessed books to which Caliban did not have access. Consequently, his first act of rebellion was the idea to destroy Prospero’s library. Moreover, I find the text to be rather ambiguous: does he only want to destroy the books or does he want to appropriate them?

As I said earlier, I was among those who said that we need to give the students as refined culture as possible regardless of the neighborhood in which they live and whatever their cultural origins as well as their capacity for critical thinking. Furthermore, while there is certainly a form of the ‘common good’ exists in every culture – shared humanitarian values – there is also the possibility for dominant groups to reassert their dominance through culture. I think that the only sure way to prevent culture from becoming a form of domination which excludes is to ensure that it is shared by the largest possible number of people. I think that this is one of the school’s principal missions. It doesn’t always succeed, in my opinion, because, as I said before, the educational system remains profoundly unequal. We can try to put a positive spin on this by saying that the school of equality has yet to be invented.

Andre, France

Janine: I remember my early childhood. I left Algeria in 1951 when I was ten. I followed my parents. First, we went to Morocco and after Morocco, I arrived in France. After everything that happened, I reconciled myself to never seeing Algeria again. This went on for many years. After about ten years, when I was working at the Nanterre Town Council with newly arrived Algerian women for the International year of women’s rights, I was asked to write something in the visitor’s book. At the time I was working at the Nanterre Town Council and I was at the front desk dealing with lot of people. The days went by and I still hadn’t written anything, so I was reminded again. They said ‘Janine, you still haven’t signed the book’. And I said ‘Oh yes, that’s true’ and then all of the sudden, I started writing, writing, writing… I wrote really quickly even though I had to deal with a lot of people at the front desk. I would write in-between visis.
Miranda Gazes Upon the Sea situated The City Chettos of Today in a Polish environment, using artistic exploration as a means of exploring the multiple meanings that the term ‘ghetto’ evokes in the context of contemporary Warsaw. Over the course of the event, participants and members of the public had the opportunity to take part in the numerous theatre, music and design workshops that made up the programme. Alongside these performances of feeling, a parallel process of artistic research equally nourished this project. Led by members of the project team in collaboration with the State Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw as well as with the Refugee Centre in the Targowek district, this dimension of the project placed the voices of refugees and migrants at the heart of this process of artistic discovery. By conducting interviews and artistic workshops in groups, Miranda Gazes upon the Sea created a space in which to reflect upon the presence of immigrant minorities in Warsaw: do these immigrant populations form inaccessible enclaves? Or, on the contrary, do they form relationships with Polish nationals easily? This project considered also how Polish populations see foreigners and examined their reactions to the presence of migrant communities in Warsaw. As such, events taking place during the first stage of the residency equally provided a space in which both Ukrainian and Vietnamese, immigrants, minorities and refugee populations living in Warsaw were able to add their voices to this debate, namely, through participatory artistic workshops. The project’s focus on questions of marginality included also theatre work with incarcerated individuals in the Służewiec Prison in Warsaw. Meetings with the prisoners became an inspiration for discussions regarding questions of isolation, closure and personal development whilst in seclusion. Underpinning these workshops was the desire to uncover and develop creative means for survival, taking initiative and finding the inspiration to create and to rebuild in whatever space one occupies.

Miranda, one of the characters from the Shakespeare’s The Tempest became an inspiration for the artistic work and a metaphor for the theater creation in the Polish context. Miranda was only a child when she debarked on the island with her father, Prospero. She remembers little of her life before then, knowing only that they arrived by sea. A solitary child, she spent her youth playing alone and watching the sea, day in and day out. Over time, as she grew into the island’s sole woman, she would come to know only two things: the island and the sea that separated her from the rest of the world. Then one day, out of this dark sea of the unknown, a Stranger arrived on the island. And it is upon this island that we rejoined Miranda on her journey. The island, our island, this circle of the familiar, surrounded by a deep and inscrutable sea; a sea that separates us from a world. And from this world, a Stranger arrives carrying with him all of the desires, the fears, and the ghosts that are wont to will themselves into existence during long days spent gazing upon the see - Miranda in the artistic work during the project became a character symbolising Polish people who by the meeting with newcomers – todays immigrants and refugees from all over the world are discovering the Polish multicultural, religional and linguistic past.
A CLOSER LOOK

The goal of this project is to redefine the term ‘ghetto’. With its many meanings influenced by history, this project questions the role that 'ghettos' plays in shaping the identity of Europeans and how they affect individual and collective reactions to – and experiences with difference. This broad issue contains the related question of how individuals construct an image of ‘the self’ through their encounter with ‘the other’, or how encounters with difference contribute to creating ‘auto-stereotypes’. The project took place in seven different European cities: Paris, Helsinki, Bologna, Milan, Berlin, Warsaw and Antwerp. Thanks to the diverse social, cultural, historical contexts of these cities, each residency explored and presented a different interpretation of the term ‘ghetto’ that was specific to the city in question. The result of each explanation was incorporated into the final performance in Warsaw, which was also considered to be the final moment in this ongoing quest to understand 'internal' or 'external' isolation in the form of the encompassing ‘ghettos’.

The authors of The City Ghettos of Today project acquired and converted material that either related to or simplified the issue of ‘ghettos’ in each city – a shortcut that is a convenient but dangerous choice – using tools that are usually employed in the domains of sociology, psychology and anthropology. By using the interview as a means of getting information, for example, they evoked the issues that seem to be the essence of the term ‘ghetto’: an alarming process of identification. In other words, the project became a mirror that reflected a terrifying image of ourselves back to us. The video camera plays a dual role in creating this terrifying image. First of all, it intensifies the interviewer’s anxiety during filming, which subsequently results in their being forced to adopt the self-reflexive attitude of speaking and listening to themselves at the same time. Furthermore it transforms the actual situation of the interview into a ‘played’ scene, which creates the creating impression of a game. Performance was the focus of the project. All personal stories and biographies that were evoked during interviews were somehow related to William Shakespeare’s The Tempest. However, these elements of theatre research were not ‘raw’ research materials per se but rather passed through the intermediary filters of the speakers – including their ‘performance’ of such material – and the project team before making contact with surrounding cultural reality. This process also relied upon multiple means of expression that are
available in the domain of contemporary art, such as video art, music, lighting design and traditional theatre practices, all of which allowed the project team to construct a multi-level picture depicting an issue that is sensitive to contemporary Western societies: the presence of immigrants. This, in turn, raises questions as it could be suggested that anthropology resolved this issue long ago.

I would like to discuss two elements derived from the variety of elements which occurred during performances in all seven cities: PVC pipes that were presented as a crucial part of the project's scenography and video art that was only used once. Given that the pipes in the first example were all of a different diameter and length, it would be possible to assume that their presence in the project could only create chaos and aesthetic dissonance. However, they became a powerful metaphor for loneliness and the limitations it engenders. When positioned vertically, one next to the other and with actors or video projectors inside, these pipes create a vivid sense of alienation rather than the sense of individuality could similarly be gleaned from this mise en scène. In the broader context of immigration, one could suggest that such ‘barriers’ as religion, language or culture might call them scientific paradigms – with which we are identified – and identify others – first and foremost by our faces.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Artists use the performing arts as a means of finding balance between work and leisure, nature and industry, the individual and society. The City Ghettos of Today posed the question of how to connect the identity problems of immigrants, Europeans, social relationships and interactions, alienation, assimilation in the context of a multinational society whose relatively mechanistic and sterile concept of urban planning belies just the slightest mark of social engineering?

The answer is simple: the appropriate perspective is required in order to perceive common issues linking these seemingly disjointed thoughts. All of these features are characterised by: social change, the structure of the suburbs and changes in immigration and economic policy, the growing disparity between the so-called ‘western world’ and the so-called ‘third world’, cultural change, the intersection of different value systems and their ability to adapt to these changes or not. From this perspective, The City Ghettos of Today re-joins Ebenezer Howard’s theories on scientific change that he elaborated in his essay on the formation of city space, entitled ‘The garden city of tomorrow’ in that both express clearly defined ideas which accurately describe the world of culture, but neither of them can be considered as truth.

In closing, allow me to share a brief overview of one of many features that connect Howard’s theories on urban space and the civic-social project The City Ghetto of Today: they both express a desire to improve ‘social engineering’ and diminish a sense of discomfort associated with contact with ‘the other’. More broadly, there are two issues – one might call them scientific paradigms – with which the Ghetto project is linked. The first, specific to Europeans, is the sense of guilt that may be seen to arise from the long-term, passionless and brutal exploitation of another human being. Europeans are now trying to atone for this by taking responsibility for the people whose fate was in any way influenced by the activities of their ancestors. In other words, we as Europeans are simultaneously and continuously rejecting Europe’s colonial past while still acting in similar spirit, although in a different form. I want to add that I do not wish
to diminish the value of social activities directed to immigrants and excluded populations in any other way. Rather, I would like to point out the problem’s complexity.

The second issue or paradigm is the so-called performative turn in the human sciences, particularly in sociology and anthropology. This is noticeable in the naming and categorization of the human sciences, as in applied psychology, involved anthropology, and so forth. These adjectives emphasize the ways in which such fields have used verbs related to performance to designate their functional qualities. Having acknowledged that this recent development in the humanities is the latest postmodern trend in anthropology, I am willing to say that this shift towards the performative is not conceptually revolutionary but is a response to and consequence of what we may refer to as a ‘meta reflection overdose’ in anthropology. It should be noted that this trend, influenced by theatre practices, gave rise to the field of performance arts, which, by combining the creative process with participation, eliminates the distinction between actor and spectator. The participant is both one and the other at the same time. From this perspective, I cannot help but share my impression that our culture has come a full circle. Ritual action has once again become magical and able to shape reality. The only difference is that an expert has replaced the shaman.

I was always taught never to reveal my Ukrainian roots. My parents decided it would be best not to talk about our heritage or background due to their fear of the consequences, which was rather hard for me. I would describe myself as a Polish woman of Ukrainian descent. I love Poland and like it here, if I was to visit Finland or Spain it would be only for a moment, but I would have to return here. I got my education and a career in Poland, but... inside in my heart I feel Ukrainian. When I had my first born baby or others after I talked to them in Ukrainian. When I thought about Ukraine, I imagined it as the most beautiful place on earth, the best place to live and not because of economical reasons but for reasons that are hard to quantify. For me it was the fact that there you could talk Ukrainian openly on the street. you do not have to whisper or hide your language... In the north of Poland some villages are full of Ukrainians and they live next to each other, and shout in Ukrainian... for me that was very interesting to see. It is a paradox but then Ukraine was a symbol of freedom for me, because you were free to talk Ukrainian as you please.

Lydia, Poland-Ukraine

At the time, we were living with our aunt, I was about 4, it was just before Christmas. Teacher in pre-school asked if anyone knows a song about Santa Claus? I raised my hand and said that of course I know and then sang an Ukrainian song about Santa Claus. After I proudly announced that to my aunt, she panicked and wanted to start packing. The fear was that someone who heard the song may report to Police that I was singing in Ukrainian language. My wife and I decided to speak Ukrainian only between the two of us, not to force anything on our kids, but to ensure that their heritage will not be alien to them. Our son and daughter speak Polish to us, we answer in Ukrainian, they talk either Polish or Ukrainian between themselves. I do not do what my grandmother did and what my mother does now, that is to remind my children to speak and answer only in Ukrainian in their presence. For me the child can answer in either Polish or Ukrainian, I will talk in Ukrainian. We have no problems with languages used in our family. I could talk to my wife in Polish and get answers in Ukrainian, she would talk Polish to her son who will in turn talk in Ukrainian... Will our children be Polish or Ukrainian? I do not know... I’m telling them the history of our family, everyone should know their families’ histories... I do not understand people who are ignorant of their grandparents names.

Łukasz, Poland-Ukraine

Lydia, Poland-Ukraine

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Łukasz, Poland-Ukraine

Lydia, Poland-Ukraine

2.
**Tomasz Gromadka**

We were a nation of exiles. They were taking our country and they kicked us out. We lived in other countries, waiting for a change in the situation. We died in foreign countries, while waiting for the morning newspaper, from which we always wanted to hear when our motherland would be free and who would help us. Our motherland is free now.

Here, on this island, is our country. It's not the same country anymore. This is our new country. Once we were Jews. We were Ukrainians, Germans. Now we are just Poles. Our island is separated from the world by the sea. You cannot see the continent from our island.

Which is good. It's also good that we forgot a lot. We never were a nation of exiles. We were and are a nation of heroes. This way it's easier to protect from foreigners.

**FERDINAND**

I came from over the sea. My country has been destroyed by a catastrophe. It hurts as all, made holes in every aspect of our life like a machine gun. You couldn't live there. You cannot live a live which evaporates. Which is why I evaporated with life.


I left, though I wanted to stay, stay in the country which created me, to create it even more for future generations.

That first feeling. That horrible feeling when I saw you looking at me. I thought I knew what was happening in your head. I was happening. You did with me whatever you wanted, for sure. I was a funny dumb person from the East. I was a dirty newcomer from the South. I was a blood-lustful brute. I was a torturer, hurting your language. I was a black devil. I was a road to nowhere and concrete. I was a ghost with a rifle. A ghost in pyjamas. A small businessman. A clerk with a briefcase with no end. I was and I couldn't stop being, although I was suffocating with your thoughts. I thought you don't want to leave me. I left your head and saw you face. You were smiling. How was it?

**MIRANDA**

I'll leave, you'll see. I'll leave to a country where people are just people and where people talk in human language about small things. I'll leave to a country, where everyone is different, as if from another world, where all these worlds combine into a universe of billion stars.

I'll leave to the bottom of the sea. I'll leave to a country where everything is flowing, where each day is a new law and new habit, where everything is changing and noone gets used to how things are.

I'll swim the sea and will land at a beach, where the sun is always shining, where sun does not hurt, where people don't make problems, where everyone has their own place and umbrella.

I'll swim to a country where everyone is working together and where they share what they find, where work helps people not work itself, where work creates human being instead of taking humanity away.

I'll leave and will travel to a country, where others cannot decide about one's life, where you can disagree, go to the street and then clean the street.

I'll leave because I'm free, to a country where poly freedom is important, but where other people exist, where they have food to eat, money to live and where they smile.

**CALIBAN**

It's me, Caliban. It's me who they killed during the war. It was my body that has been burnt away through the chimney. I was the one cast away and exiled. It was me whom you forgot about. It was me who forgot about myself. It was me who never was at your place. It was me who never came. It was me who has always been here. It was me who never left.

This island is my home, to which I no longer have the key. There are no photos inside. There is different furniture, walls look different and the floor has been walked on by different people. There's not a single item that remembers me. I'm remembered only by dust, not cleaned for over a decade, hidden just under the roof. This dust is the same dust that had fallen from my table, the same dust that had fallen from my hair, same dust within my spit from laughter I had long time ago. I know it won't survive the next makeover. Next change.
The Bologna residency focused on various forms of camps for migrants and political refugees located in Italy, Europe and Africa. Project interviews were focused on an Afghan camp in Patras, a refugee camp on the borders of Sierra Leone, a center for identification and expulsion (C.I.E.) in Bologna, and on a prison in Libya. The methodological hypothesis was to listen to those who had lived in such contexts, and through the reflection and analysis of anthropologists, sociologists, political geographers in dialogue with artists, to deconstruct those structures into constituent elements, with particular attention to categories ‘similar’ to those of narratology (e.g., characters that act, typical dynamics, types of conflicts, structures of life experiences, objects). During the second week, participants and organizers used the key words emerged in such categories as stimulations for art workshops involving nearly 100 participants and embraced practices of writing, video, theater, illustration, and music. The final performance, which involved around fifty participants-actors from fourteen different countries, was titled *The Island is Full of Noises*, which is a verse from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Viewed through this Shakespearean lens, the ‘camp’ signaled a form of isolation whilst simultaneously emphasizing a richness of possible voices and interpretive keys. The performance took place in the prestigious setting of the Cortile del Pozzo (Courtyard of the Well), the courtyard of the Town Hall of Bologna. On directorial level, it was divided into two distinct phases: an itinerant time where the public could explore the island, which included many small scenes based upon interviews that were written by the playwright Tomasz Gromadka; and a second more central time which, focusing on the clash between Prospero and Caliban, proposed choral and choreographic scenes that used music composed during the project’s music workshops by the composer Alejandro Olarte.
Sometimes I believe that during my uninterrupted journey from Iran even once I have thought about eating rather than carrying on my path. I didn’t think about food, only about moving on. The journey under the truck is very risky. If you hang to the wrong wheel and fall asleep you may end up crushed by the spare wheel as it is lifted up. You may also fall down if you doze off. It happened to a guy in Forlì in 2007-2008, it happened to many other people. If you are caught inside a truck or if you are shipped back from Italy and in many other cases you run a lot of risks. Much depends on who catches you. The same goes for the police. If you are caught inside a truck during your uninterrupted journey from Iran even once I have thought about eating rather than carrying on my path. I didn’t think about food, only about moving on. The journey under the truck is very risky. If you hang to the wrong wheel and fall asleep you may end up crushed by the spare wheel as it is lifted up. You may also fall down if you doze off. It happened to a guy in Forlì in 2007-2008, it happened to many other people. If you are caught inside a truck or if you are shipped back from Italy and in many other cases you run a lot of risks. Much depends on who catches you. The same goes for the police.

Jan, Afghanistan

When you leave Iran towards Greece you think you have an agreement with a smuggler to get you to Istanbul from Teheran. From Istanbul, after dealing with another smuggler, you believe you will get to Athens, then Patras, and from Patras to Rome or Ancona. You don’t really know anything about these things, though the first smuggler has told you about them. In truth, you’ve already been sold. They are all in league; you think you are the first smuggler has told you about them. In truth, you’ve already been sold. They are all in league; you think you are acting of your own will, but they have already decided for you. I never said positive things about them. I would die, rather than doing that job.

The migration regime as an embodied experience

The island is full of noises

/Caliban in The Tempest/

In Shakespeare’s The Tempest, a ship washes ashore on an apparently deserted island. The Duke Prospero, who has been exiled from his city of Milan, has orchestrated a terrible storm so that its crew finally pays the price for his loss. For 12 years he has been living on this island. Being constrained in this way, Prospero decides to improve his magical powers. He meets Caliban, a speechless, monstrous creature, and teaches him the power of language. In return he submits Caliban and Ariel, an angel who had been imprisoned by Caliban’s deceased mother, the witch Sycorax, to servitude. A plot by Caliban and the enemy crew to kill Prospero and institute a new ruler on the island fails as Ariel, the ‘good’ slave, distracts Prospero’s enemies with his magic. Prospero’s daughter Miranda is lured into marrying one of the crew members so that Prospero can return to Milan as its rightful ruler.

In many respects, Shakespeare’s The Tempest invokes the destabilizing sense of loss migrants endure while washing ashore on Europe’s borders. Being exiled from one’s home, not controlling one’s own destiny, being confined to a foreign place that is no one’s own choosing, but also the hope of establishing a new life, are all central issues in Shakespeare’s play. At the same time, The Tempest also assigns a central role to the relationship between colonized and colonizer, or masters and slaves. It is not a surprise, for example, that the play has figures so prominently in anti-colonial writings, particularly in Aimé Cesaire’s The Tempest. The figure of Caliban is frequently used to literally ‘write back’ the colonial past from the margin to the metropolitan centre. Bearing these observations in mind, the Bologna team decided to use Shakespeare’s play as a loose literary reference to discuss the cultural ambivalence of the migrant experience. We had two concrete reasons for this. One has to do with the spatial marginalization, or rather the ‘territorial stigma’ (Wacquant et al. 2014) associated with having passed through certain places. Reflecting upon Europe’s urbanization in the last two decades, Loc Wacquant uses the term anti-ghetto to designate the peripheral, marginalized urban areas that are usually associated with immigrant livelihoods on the continent.
coming from over 30 countries, the company has worked for more than a decade with immigrants.

On the other hand, this emerging migration is seemingly borderless – but in reality, strictly contained and channelled, like fingerprinting, digital movement in different directions (Mezzadra and Neilson). In recent years, new forms of mobile border containment, like fingerprinting, digital passports and databases, emerge to discipline and categorize migrants as they move across Europe’s passports and databases, emerging to discipline and contain – landscape (Lyons 2006). In this context, what we refer to as a semi-permeable film that filters and channels movement in different directions (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). In recent years, new forms of mobile border containment, like fingerprinting, digital passports and databases, emerge to discipline and categorize migrants as they move across Europe’s seemingly borderless – but in reality, strictly channelled and contained – landscape (Lyons 2006). On the other hand, this emerging migration regime, as well as the new uncertainties it generates for people’s present and future livelihoods, has gradually become a central theme among the members of Cantieri Meticci, the team which hosted The City Ghettos of Today workshop in Bologna in October 2013 and June–July 2014. Having worked for more than a decade with immigrants coming from over 30 countries, the company has gradually become a reference point for migrants and asylum seekers coming to the city. Similarly to Shakespeare’s The Tempest, the new arrivals experience a sense of loss while arriving on the island and are segregated from its inhabitants behind physical, cultural or digital walls. Like Caliban says, the island is full of noises, some of them beautiful and inviting, some of them revolutionizing and magical, some overwhelming and crude. To better grasp these ambivalent sounds, therefore, we decided to associate the sense of spatial marginalization migrants endure within Europe’s borders to their often-traumatizing journeys towards the continent in an experiential and corporeal workshop. In the following section, we provide a short overview of the methods we used and the concepts we adopted to associate these experiences in a theatrical play.

### A TESTIMONIAL-CORPOREAL PLAY

The starting point of our exercise consisted of inviting all of the 30 interviewees to participate in a corporeal workshop. In the following section, we provide a short overview of the methods we used and the concepts we adopted to associate these experiences in a theatrical play.

We addressed these questions through a combination of key testimonies from refugees and informants with an experiential workshop where these testimonies were integrated in a wider bodily and literary reflection. Less than a comprehensive overview of the conditions for transcontinental migration, we used the summary of these testimonies as vignettes, or empirical illustrations of the sensory aspects of migrants’ spatial confinement, which were then subsequently compared and integrated as workshop material. What was striking about these testimonies is that they simultaneously contested the stereotyp-
ical imagery of Europe’s borders as an impenetrable wall or fence (a ‘line on the sand’), while at the same time they call forth a more intriguing scenery of frenetic spatial construction that considerably conditions migrants’ lives. While one obviously needs to distinguish between the diverse forms of spatial confinement migrants are constricted to (the witnesses we recorded for the purpose of this play talked about refugee camps as well as makeshift prisons, official host and detention centers as well as overcrowded apartments, trucks and dinghies), and it is difficult to generalize even after a decade of organic research among immigrants in Bologna, the closed camp-like environments migrants pass through while trying to reach Europe’s southern shores appear to have very similar effects on migrants’ self-perception. The violent impact of exile, the channeled movement towards temporary protection, the forced concealment of one’s identity, are recurrent themes in the recounting of refugees’ journeys. If pain is indeed a ‘mode of knowing [in the world]’ (Dauphine 2007), their personal histories tell us a lot about the modes in which violent physical restraint becomes constitutive of one’s agency while navigating this unstable landscape of the border. In such a frenetic environment, where one never knows what the next day will bring, where trust is low but the necessity to transform one’s desperate condition is high, people’s attitudes automatically become tactical as one obviously needs to fend for oneself and occasions to take a chance are scarce. Besides this tactical agency of refugees, a final striking aspect concerned their sense of being out-of-time / out-of-place. Kept in the dark about their possibility towards freedom or safety, refugees’ everyday life is transformed into a series of tactical movements and haphazard attempts to anticipate ongoing movement. Henrik Vigh provides a useful metaphor to describe these hyper-mobile life worlds: that of navigating bodies in a fluid and constantly shifting environment (Vigh 2009). At the same time, we discovered, this navigation is considerably restricted by the generalized uncertainty migrants – and particularly the refugees we interviewed for the purpose of this workshop – experience on their way.

CONCLUSION

John Berger writes that today migrants live in a prison without borders. Exiled from their shaken homes but disintegrated from their host environments, they are often unintentionally cut off from their own experiences as they continue to live in a sort of motionless, stationary time. In the context of The City Ghettos of Today project, the Bologna workshop instead tried to invoke the frenetic, channeled confinement of migrants while they are trying to reach the shores of contemporary Europe; secondly, it analysed how their experience reflects their continued marginalization from the continent’s metropolitan fabric. Contrasting the static imagery of the Fortress, which has so dominantly come to represent he governance of such ‘out-of-place’ populations (Hall 2012: vi), we sought for a more embodied (or corporeal) approach towards today’s migration regimes. In sum, we wanted to give space to the sensory experience of migrant detention in its multiple forms rather than accept the camp as a generalized condition. We wanted to explore how the existential ambiguity of spatial confinement – which simultaneously involves aspects of submission and resistance, immobility and hypermobility – reflects migrants’ territorial stigmatization both in their onwards journeys towards Europe as well as their lives within Europe. Finally, we wanted to open up the polysemic character of the border rather than accept its looming imposition. The textual reference of The Tempest helped us quite well to explore this ambiguity in a comparative and literary sense.

RINGLEADER

Ladies and gentlemen, you have not seen a show like this! You won’t believe your eyes, when you get a closer look! You won’t believe until you touch! You will not find this in the deepest and darkest parts of the Internet as well as your own mind. It’s beautiful in its ugliness. It’s smart in its stupidity. Caught in the sea to bring awe. In a moment, just now! Live! Specially for you! Human-Fish!

HUMAN-FISH

I loved earth. Hard and stable. I loved the ground under my feet. Walks. Big and visible footsteps. I hated the sea, its nauseous feeling and uncertainty. One day I woke up underwater. Sea flooded my country, government buildings, banks, schools, churches and private live of normal people. My human body drowned, only my instinct survived.

RINGLEADER

So sad today, so dramatic. Tell as a joke. Or I’ll tell one. Human-fish comes to a shop and asks: excuse me, will I get a fish? Irritated shopkeeper answers: Our Mister, this is not a dating agency.

HUMAN-FISH

It’s hard to organise your life when everything is flowing and running away. So I ran away also. The other way. I swam against the waves, I fought lightnings. My shout was louder than thunders. I lost to indifference of ships, which smashed me with their hulls. I have no super power. I’m not a super hero. I’m not a weird creature. Human-fish is a fraud. I’m a normal, scared fish, like others swimming in search of food and rest.
2.
So I had a dream, but then everything changed. The country was free in 1991. But the liberators didn’t create a democratic State. Until 1996 there was no freedom in Eritrea, no free journal or television. So people said: ‘Ok, the country is free, but nothing changed from colonialism’. The president declared war against Ethiopia again, with the reason of borders. All Eritreans went to defend the land. Because he pushed saying Ethiopia would reconquer Eritrea. So everybody went honestly to defend their country. 30,000 young people died in two years and war stopped. People understood that the regime begun. The president started controlling people. The president declared: ‘Every man at 17 years old must do military service’. In that way they educate you and grow you up as they want. For me there was a shocking change because I dreamed to stay with my parents. To go to school, to live there, but they forced me to do military service. Meanwhile university was closed, so my dream was vanishing. They closed university and opened boarding schools outside of the city to have better control. I did military service in a very far place from where I’ve been born and grown up. I stayed one year in this field, but they knew I didn’t like it. So they tortured me everyday, they hit me a lot. I did this life for one year with sacrifice, saying to myself: ‘Ok, I’ll do this sacrifice for one year, but then I’ll go back home and study’. And there I lost my hope to live in Eritrea because there wasn’t anything good. Then I thought to runaway, even if it was very hard. Because the law says that you can be shot if you are at the border. Then if they find out you’re running away, they put you in a jail.

(...) A man helped us, took us home and gave us clothes and shoes. And he told us where the refugees shelter was. We went there and there was the UNHCR three or four tents in the middle of the desert with disgusting food. No safety because the regime with ten soldiers can take you home.

No policeman, so even with two soldiers you’re busted. We didn’t sleep well, because we had to see if they arrived. However even there they treat you very bad. We waited one month to have a document which said: ‘This guy can live in this land’, in that four tents. But who can live in the desert without food? We had to go away, but it was illegal to do. But with a difficult situation like this, you have to become illegal.

I had to go away. I had to go to America, to Europe or somewhere else. I had three possibilities: fly to America for 20,000 dollars, to Europe for 13,000, to Southern Africa for 5,000. And then you go to Europe crossing the sea, the desert and it’s less expensive. If you arrive by plane, you don’t leave your fingerprints in Italy. You arrive to Rome or Malpensa and then you can even run away. Otherwise if you arrive by rubber boat, you risk your life in a desert. And you risk to leave your fingerprints in Italy, because you have to leave them once arrived in Lampedusa.

Abhram, Eritrea
Helsinki’s approach to the theme ‘ghetto’ focused on knowledge, practices and skills that become marginalized when people emigrate from other countries to Finland. This triggers a process of searching for a group with whom it is possible to share the knowledge and values that are not recognized elsewhere in Finnish society. These non-spatial ghettos become often disregarded sources of hidden visions and skills.

The process in Helsinki started with interviews with migrants actively involved in the Finnish society with backgrounds in Latin America, Iraq, Somalia, different countries of Africa and Russia. The interviews were prepared together with a project called Sivuvalo that works to improve the position of writers that write in foreign languages in Finland. Sivuvalo poets also created site-specific poetry that were placed in the digital map of The City Ghettos of Today project. Helinä Rautavaara Museum that focuses on the intangible heritage of non-European cultures, prepared an encounter with representatives of the Somali community, one of the biggest migrant groups in Finland. Pacunet ry organised a panel discussion with representatives of wider African community in Finland.

Based on the encounters, the participants’ experiences and the local team’s preparatory work, audio-visual content was developed in the workshops and incorporated into the installation structure. The content included sound samples and videos based on the stories written or told by the participants, including an animation. The installation also served as the scenography for experimental performances that were created in tandem with the installation. The first performance took place in Stoa, the main venue of the project in Helsinki, a cultural centre in a culturally rich area in Eastern part of Helsinki and the second one in shopping centre Forum in the centre of the city. Included in the programme there was a seminar, which presented the cases of the project’s outcomes in participating European cities.
At that time Estonia did not ratify the Geneva Convention relating to refugees. There weren’t any refugee centers. We explained that we fled from Iraq for political reasons, some fled because they were afraid of war. We repeated that we were not criminals. We asked for refugee status, but they refused. They wanted to send us to Russia, but I told them that Russia would not accept us back. I asked if they could let us go to another country, but they said ‘no’ - for them it was better to keep us in jail – Sweden, Finland, Norway paid for us. It was a business. We learned that in 1995, Finland had to choose 500 refugees.

Each prisoner had the right to go to church every Sunday. During this period, we were considering a hunger strike, but there was a question - how to organize it if people are locked up in separate cells? One Sunday we took advantage of the situation and organized a meeting in the time allotted for the church. Finally, we were all sitting in one place, where the priest began to tell the story of David. He said that David was a strong, twenty year old man. I translated his words from Russian to Arabic: ‘Today we are here to talk about the hunger strike’. He was talking for over an hour about David and his battle with Goliath. He behaved like an actor on stage - waving his arms and legs. When he summarized the story of David and Goliath, I said: ‘We have to be unanimous in the decision to strike’. It took half an hour. Finally, someone asked me, ‘Josif, what about sick people?’ I turned to the priest and asked: ‘How old was David?’ He replied that he was only 20 years. Then I said in Arabic: ‘Sick people will not take part in the hunger strike’. We decided that within 10 days we will send a letter to inform that we start a hunger strike - excluding children, women and the sick people. Among the strikers were 10 men who had to strike for effect – of course, I was among them. We decided that we will collect some chocolate, dry bread – we did not want to die, but the strike took place. We were protesting for 30 days - after three months, I came to the hospital - finally they understood that this is not a joke, and let us go to Finland. When we left the resort manager asked me - ‘Josif, how did you organize to strike? I replied that ‘It was by God’s providence.’

Josif, Iraq

### Developing a ‘ghetto concept’ for Helsinki

From the beginning of the project, the team behind the Helsinki installation of *The City Ghettos of Today* was aware of the many negative associations linked to the term ‘ghetto’ and the potential that qualifications like this has to marginalise affected populations. As a result, they chose not to identify any particular neighbourhood in Helsinki as a ‘ghetto’ in order to avoid stigmatising these areas or their residents over the course of the project. This conscious refusal to identify specific areas as ‘ghettos’ reflects a more widespread political imperative to prevent the construction of urban enclaves in Helsinki and surrounding cities. City planning in these areas has actively mixed different types of housing alternatives together in order to ensure the heterogeneity in the socio-economic structures of these different areas.

This policy to promote diversity in Finnish urban landscapes is also reflected in the nation’s educational system, with students attending schools that are implanted in the neighbourhoods in which they live. In recent years, political leaders have similarly attempted to raise the number of non-native Finnish citizens that attend Finnish public schools by promoting housing and economic policies that place ‘new’ Finnish citizens into schools located in a range of socio-economically diverse areas. Team members therefore felt that identifying a specific ‘migrant-rich’ area as ‘a ghetto’ in an international project like this could easily contribute to a loss of status for area residents and lead to the stigmatisation of its residents. After considering the risks for this area-based approach, the team decided to define ‘ghetto’ more abstractly as a collection of ‘boundaries’ that separate groups of people from one another.

**THE TEMPEST IN HELSINKI**

While meant to serve as a common frame for all cities participating in *The City Ghettos of Today*, the incorporation of William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* into this exploration of ‘boundaries’ in Helsinki proved to be a difficult task. Participants raised issues in the preparatory phase of the project related to the implications of giving priority to a classical textual text in a project involving multicultural participants while others were concerned about whether this pre-selected text would prevent the experiences and voices of local participants from being heard. Other questions were related to the message that the combination of these predefined project elements suggested, such as the concept of ghetto, the migrants, the scenic elements, and characters from *The Tempest* like Prospero and Caliban. Together these elements arguably imposed an oppressive-based interpretation of migrants as inhabitants of ghettos that the team preferred to avoid for reasons related to stigmatisation mentioned previously. In addition to moving away from oppressor/appressed stereotypes, the Helsinki team also wished to avoid reproducing racial and sexual stereotypes, rejecting out of hand the pre-
defined idea that the migrants would play the role of ‘the oppressed’. This perspective also impacted the team’s approach to casting the performance, wherein the oppressed character of Caliban was assigned to Finnish natives while the idea of casting a dark-skinned Caliban was rejected.

Team members ultimately viewed Prospero’s rebuilt kingdom as the most relevant way to use The Tempest to explore inward migration in the context of modern-day Finland. In this context, multiple Prosperos became representatives of all people who leave one world behind and are forced to build a new one. In the context of Finland, Prospero therefore symbolised individuals from other countries who had migrated to Finland and whose skills and experiences were not recognised by their new countrymen and women. This situation of marginality also rejoins the notions of ‘boundaries’ and ‘limits’ related to the Helsinki understanding of ‘ghetto’ because it points to the walls that exist between people who are not able to communicate, understand, and appreciate a certain construction of special skills, wisdoms or practices in others. While the Helsinki residency did not culminate in a theatre performance, the artistic team and participants transformed this reading of The Tempest into a final installation taking place in the Gallery at Stoa that was entitled Prospero’s veils.

This title was meant to refer to individuals who leave one world behind for another. The decision to include the word ‘veils’ in the title was a conscious reference to things that are hidden, unreadable and misunderstood and also the possibility for further interpretation open, evoking Muslim women’s ‘veils’ among other possibilities.

THE HELSINKI TEAM

The Helsinki residency of The City Ghettos of Today was organised by Helsinki-based members of the project’s international artistic team and local actors and partners. Helsinki contributed two artists to the European project’s international team: sound artist Alejandro Olarte, from the department of sound technology at the University of Arts in Helsinki and video artist Marek Pliucienik, a member of the experimental Ptarmigan association for foreign and local artists. Local coordination for the project was spearheaded by Outi Korhonen, who worked at the Arts Council of Uusimaa when the project started. Over the course of the project, this was incorporated into the Arts Promotion Centre Finland. The local team also included two researchers at various stages in the project: Maria Koski-J municipal anthropologist and the director of the Helinä Rautavaara museum, an ethnographic museum focusing on the intangible heritage of non-European countries and their presence in today’s Finland, and Helena Dikarin-Lab, post-doc researcher of art education in post-colonial spaces.

Local project partners included a wide range of cultural and educational entities based in Helsinki, including the aforementioned Ptarmigan and Helinä Rautavaara museum as well as the cultural production unit of Humak, a university of applied sciences. The project also involved support from Pacunet, a multidisciplinary cultural association with a strong presence of migrants with Asian and African backgrounds, represented by their chairman Walter Fondo. The Public Outreach department of the Finnish National Theater was also involved in the project, which included the active participation of drama instructor and director Eveliina Heinonen in project workshops. The Finnish Citizen’s Forum, a nation-wide institution for non-formal learning also joined the team during the project’s preliminary phase in the form of plan-ning with Sivuvalo writers also included planning inter-actions and feedback sessions to discuss topics related to the overall project themes. Before the arrival of the international team in September 2014, the team held six workshops with a group of local participants between February and August 2014 during which different methodologies and ideas were tested and exchanged. Coordination with Sivuvalo writers also included planning inter-views based on their previously written texts. It also involved the inscription of site-specific poetry devoted to different landmarks in the city onto a map of Helsinki, which was subsequently presented to a public audience at a poetry club during the Runoku Poetry Festival.

The City Ghettos of Today

The project’s host institution Stoa is an active cultural centre that is owned and primarily funded by Helsinki’s City Cultural Office. As a cultural centre, Stoa proposes a number of different projects to the public including concerts, theatre and dance performances, classes and exhibits. The building itself houses a variety of different spaces ranging from an amphitheatre, a library and a gallery to multiple meeting rooms and a restaurant. It equally houses a workers’ institute that provides adult education in a wide variety of topics at a low cost, including free courses of Finnish for foreigners. Stoa is located in eastern Helsinki in an area that has a rich mix of inhabitants from different cultural backgrounds, which reflected the project’s interest in addressing and attracting a culturally diverse public. The Helsinki residency for The City Ghettos of Today project primarily took place in Stoa’s gallery. The gallery space is located by the entrance hall of the cultural centre and its glass wall allows passers-by to observe events taking place inside the space.

The installation of Prospero’s veils in Stoa’s gallery space also corresponded with the Nor-
The installation for Prospero’s veils that was realised in collaboration with The City Ghettos of Today’s international artistic team took place in Stoa between 8 and 20 September 2014. During the first week, project participants encountered representatives of different migrant groups for interviews that had been pre-arranged by members of the Helsinki team. The focus of these encounters was upon the skills and knowledge that these individuals had transported to Helsinki; a perspective that echoes the team’s decision to use the displaced Prospero as the character referent for the Helsinki installation. Interviewers included Crisólogo; Mexican economist Yesmith Sanchez; Iraqi writer Yousif Abu Al Fawz; a Somali association activist and engineer Yusuf Mubarak; a group of Somali women working at Helsinki Rautavaara Museum whose spokesperson was mainly special educator Suado Jama, participants in a discussion about Africans in Finland; Jude Njila; Viviane Bossina and Dodou Touray accompanied by the musician Morasta Sesay and finally Polina Kopova, a Russian-born journalist. The interviews were planned in collaboration with Sivuvalo writers, Helsinki Rautavaara Museum and Pacunet association.

**THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE INSTALLATION**

Prospero’s veils included a series of workshops that combined sound work, exercises with the black scenographic tubes and writing and drama exercises. During this process, Helsinki-based members of the international team proposed a number of activities to generate installation material. Alejandro Olarte worked with various sound techniques for the installation while Marek Pluciennik explored different techniques and exercises related to video work that combined filming and simultaneous projections upon large groups of people. Olarte and Pluciennik also created a vast archive of sound and video recordings that included musical, sonic and textual elements and interviews conducted in various cities during other residencies. In addition to these actions, Walter Fondo realized activities with migrant groups including a study about their integration done for the Citizen’s Forum. The participants of these activities were offered to join the activities of The City Ghettos of Today in September. Some participants joined the whole process and some could only participate part of the process.

**REMARKS**

At the outset of the project, the Helsinki team’s aim was to create meaningful dialogues through art-based methods. In the installation for Prospero’s veils, this goal was realised through a combination of visual and sound elements that created an atmosphere of dialogue and diversity, and that was even able to draw previously non-participating individuals into the project. For example, messages recorded in different languages and diffused during the installation encouraged several passers-by to spontaneously contribute to the installation in one way or another. Somali, Iraqi, Russian and Chechyan visitors were therefore able to include their contributions to the installation alongside those proposed by workshop participants. In this way, the installation functioned as a tool that brought people from very different backgrounds together. In a similar way, it also became a platform for leaving one’s own message or for communicating indirectly with others. The black scenic tubes also became a tool for communication and exchange during the installation. Alejandro Olarte recorded visitors’ songs or stories that were then played in the tubes for other members of the public to hear. The inclusion of a recording of Chechyan pop-singer Liza Umarova inside a tube is one example of the ways in which the public’s interaction with the tubes was capable of creating surprising and unexpected moments during the installation process. These tubes also provided shelter for visitors to the installation to act and created interactive moments between people and objects. While the project installation at Stoa was able to create an atmosphere of dialogue and exchange with the public, the Helsinki residency also inspired the creation of several interdisciplinary cooperatives, which were formed by project participants in the wake of the project.
The Milan stage of the project involved a collaboration with the Teatro degli Incontri (TdI), a group comprising twenty citizen-actors, including women, men, youth, migrants. Working with the international artistic team, the TdI group brought their individual contributions related to the theme of contemporary ghettos to fruition in a final installation and performance - the sum of a year’s journey.

These individual contributions were rooted in on-the-ground investigations into low-income housing suburbs of Milan which took the form of a collection of interviews and audio-video impressions. The result was the production of the performance *Chiusi Dentro* (*Locked Inside*). *Chiusi Dentro* was performed during the Milan residency in the courtyard of a council building on the outskirts of Milan and was filmed by The City Ghettos of Today international artistic team. The TdI group also collaborated with *The City Ghettos of Today* to produce original writing, fragments of plays and songs. Continuing the project’s exploration of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, the Milan residency broached the subject of contemporary ghettos by focusing on the figure of Caliban: the charming stranger requiring education and taming. Explorations took place at the Paolo Pini in Milan.

Founded as an artistic group in 2010, TdI is now a cultural association that creates theatre work under the artistic direction of Gigi Gherzi. At its core, TdI is a point of contact between cultures, actors and audience, Italians and immigrants. The group includes social workers, teachers and artists. It is an encounter between ‘classic’ dramaturgy and fragmentary writings, theatrical acts and short theatrical events that take place in the territories of the city, between acting and performance, language of the actor and other forms of expression. Among the group’s goals is the desire to find a new relationship with the spectator, who is asked to be an active part of the performance: to rebuild the public, create community.
Before I came to Italy, I spent 3 months in France. In Senegal, I lived in constant fear, but I did not know how to flee. Once, I got information that an artistic group is planning to go to France to perform. I decided that I'd ask them for help. At first they declined, however I insisted and asked more, because I could not live in Senegal. After lots of talks and begging they finally agreed, when they understood that living as a handicap girl in this country is impossible. We agreed that they would help me leave Senegal, but in France we will part and I wouldn’t ask them for more help. That would be the end of friendship. When we landed in France, they left me and went away. I did not know anyone, I had no money for a hotel. I decided to stay at the train station, because a lot of people slept there. I lived there for 3 months. I slept there, I ate there, I did everything there. It was a difficult experience as I was alone, I did not know anyone, I had no friends. I was afraid to leave the train station to not get lost. One day I met a man from Senegal and I told him about my problems. He advised me to go to Italy, because France was not a good country to live for handicap people. He insisted that I should leave France. He gave me money for a ticket. And so I arrived to Milan.

Fatou, Senegal

In Milan’s history, the word ‘ghetto’ has often been misused by politicians to identify areas or populations that are considered difficult to manage, like the area of Via Padova street or the Roma population. This article therefore aims to examine how the concept of ‘ghetto’ can be used to define different situations that are not exclusively physical locations but, rather refer to a variety of ‘life conditions’ that are related to a part of Milan’s population. This article suggests that such ‘life conditions’ are largely the result of a widespread housing emergency that has been affecting the city since the early 1990s.

**URBAN AND SUBURBAN MILAN**

Milan is the largest and most populated city in northern Italy, characterized by a road structure similar to a series of concentric circles around the historical city centre. Since the early 1990s, there has been a measurable increase in the number of districts in Milan that contain a high percentage of foreign populations. Milan’s Chinatown, which is located near the city centre in Via Padova street and serves as one of the main thoroughfares in and out of Milan, provides a visible example of this phenomenon. Moreover, according to the 31 December 2013 ISTAT estimate, the foreign resident population was 264,238, or 19.5% of the population. When taking into account the presence of illegal migrants within the city, Milan’s total foreign population rises to nearly 23.2%. If this trend continues, this number could continue to rise to 25% by the end of 2015.

In Milan, extra-urban enclaves do not exist in the same way that they do in contexts like Greater Paris, where distance from the city centre delimits a hierarchy in social and economic status. In the same way, so-called ‘blighted’ areas are not necessarily related to specific neighbourhoods. These disadvantaged areas are located on the outskirts of Milan as well as in the city centre, and suburban areas far from the city centre also attract wealthy segments of the population.

**THE ‘HIDDEN Ghetto’: HOUSING EMERGENCY AND HOMELESSNESS**

Milan has often been portrayed in public arenas as a major centre of European finance. This public image clashes with the reality that a large part of the city is composed of individuals who are excluded from this appearance of well-being and luxury. Despite the fact that the city has large residential real estate assets that continue to grow, particularly thanks to investments for the Expo 2015, rental and sale prices are still so elevated that
many find it difficult to afford to buy or maintain a house, whether these home seekers are Italian or foreign. Social housing in the outlying districts only partly succeeds in responding to this housing shortage and as a result, many people are forced to occupy buildings illegally in order to find housing accommodations. Italian and foreign populations therefore inhabit entire buildings where living conditions are precarious.

In addition, a growing number of both Italian and foreign individuals live on the street. This homeless population has grown since 2010, as evidenced by the fact that in 2010 the Municipality offered 1300 free beds in shelters across the city and in the 2014 this number rose to 2700. Refugees who have arrived in Italy in the last ten years frequently re-join this homeless population. However, despite the fact that the refugee hospitality system in Italy added 16,000 new places (300 in Milan) in shelters across the country in 2014, this number has failed to meet the demand of newly arrived asylum seekers and homeless Italians.

Milan is long been a reference point for refugees who have landed in southern Italy as a city in which it is easy to find a job as well as a transport hub to other cities in Europe, with particularly easy access to ground transportation (trains and buses). In fact, the majority of refugees who arrive in the city ultimately plan to travel to northern Europe, where social policies towards refugees make it easier for these groups to put down roots in Europe in a sustainable way. What is more, between 2013 and 2015 Milanese municipality chose not to officially identify refugees as such in order to avoid restrictions related to the Dublin Regulation. Those refugees that are not able to secure places to stay among these refugees and shelter in several areas of the city close to the main railway stations: ‘real’ ghettos that are hidden from the eyes of the authorities and citizens where refugees try to recreate a small and mutually supportive community capable of responding to the needs of newcomers ready to embark upon the journey to northern Europe. Since August 2013, the situation has been further worsened by the massive arrival of Syrian refugees, that arrived after the start of the war in Syria, and Eritrean refugees. The Milan municipality has estimated that approximately 40,000 Syrian refugees have transited through the city since the end of 2013, whether by landing in southern Italy or having arrived by train in Milan Central railway station. The sudden arrival of these refugees has been deemed an emergency situation by city authorities and several temporary dormitories and First Aid centres have since been opened at the Central railway station. Eritrean refugees that arrived after 2013, the official estimated number of which is presently unknown, have been invited into churches, parks and houses belonging to members of the Eritrean diaspora that has been implanted in an area bordering the city centre since the 1970s. Eritreans started arriving in the city after its municipality decided to stop the ‘official’ identifications of refugees in 2013, presumably because there was less of a legal risk for smugglers of these groups at the time.

The situation of the homeless and refugees in Milan is constantly changing and the municipality has not yet found a clear strategy for facing this situation from a policymaking perspective.

The ghetto as a stereotype: Via Padova and political use of the word ghetto

As previously mentioned, the Via Padova neighbourhood is a prime example of how the term ‘ghetto’ has been used for political purposes. Via Padova is a street that is kilometers long and is one of the roads that connects the city centre to the outskirts of Milan. It is a neighbourhood that shows visible signs of its history: the enormous influx of immigrants from southern Italy that took place after World War II and the on-going flow foreign immigrants that have entered and passed through the city since the 1990s has left indelible marks on this area. Over the last two decades, Via Padova has become the most multi-ethnic area of Milan. Compared to other areas, the peculiarity of Via Padova neighbourhood is that a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous collection of foreign communities of recent migration has spring up along this urban axis. One of the main features that renders this area particularly attractive to foreigners is that property owners have been able to maintain low rental costs compared to the rest of the city despite the neighbourhood’s proximity to the city centre. Italian citizens who can afford to live in more prestigious areas have gone elsewhere, as have such local services as banks, shops or public offices. This situation of abandonment and economic accessibility in such a heavily populated area has similarly had the effect of producing a great deal of petty crime in the Via Padova area.

For these reasons, political officials have often used the Via Padova district to highlight the need for increased security measures in areas inhabited by foreigners. During the decade in which a conservative party governed the city, the army controlled access to the Via Padova.

This situation of heightened security created a ghetto in which the inhabitants were forced to live segregated from the rest of the city. While political leaders justified this voluntary militarization of the district by referring to an increased need for urban security, this political ghettoization of the Via Padova was primarily the result of a political decision against investing in the urban redevelopment. Within this forcibly segregated environment, foreign and Italian inhabitants learned to live together through networks of mutual aid. The social interconnectivity and cultural diversity that this situation of enclosure has engendered has attracted many multicultural associations and redevelopment urban projects to the area with the aim to reintegrate the ghetto into the city.

The stigma as ghetto: The Roma issue

According to a survey conducted by the Italian Senate’s Committee on Human Rights, there are approximately forty-thousand Roma and Sinti living in informal settlements across Italy, including about two thousand in the city of Milan. As is the case in Europe as a whole, Roma communities continue to be persecuted in Italy. This persecution has, in turn, effectively marginalised thousands Roma families from Italian society. Until a few years ago, the conservative party was the only political party in Italy to actively promote prejudice against Roma populations. However, this prejudice now extends to all political parties in Italy. The media is also active in promoting prejudice against these groups by diffusing Roma stereotypes that portray these individuals as criminals. For example, Roma and Sinti only appear in Italian mainstream media when they commit crimes and they are often associated with negative situations related to crimes even if they are not involved. This kind of stereotypical portrayal links the presence of these groups to insecurity and danger.

Until 2013, the Roma community in Milan was divided into two authorized camps in which all residents were guaranteed access to essential services and public schools, and were located in informal settlements in different areas of the city. The authorized camps were managed by NGOs in partnership with the municipality. In 2010, however, the new municipal administration failed to come to an agreement with members of the Roma community regarding the possibility of creating a long-term settlement. The relationship between local authorities and Roma communities has worsened since this time, with local authorities gradually introducing policies intended to remove these groups from the city altogether. After a series of forced evictions from irregular camps in
2014 that left hundreds of Roma families homeless, the authorized camps were officially closed. At present, the Roma community is largely hiding in Milan, where they live in small groups in abandoned areas (railway stations, disused factories, overpasses) in a condition of constant insecurity. The associations that work with Roma and some members of Roma community suggest that this increase of evictions is the preparation for the Expo 2015 and that local officials are attempting to ‘clean up’ the city by ridding it of anything that does not correspond to Milan’s image as one of Europe’s economic capital.

**MILAN AND THE EXPO 2015:**

**A NEW FACE FOR THE CITY**

Milan is currently preparing to host the Expo 2015. Preparations for the Expo 2015 have had a big impact on the city from both an economic point of view as well as in the domain of urban planning. The influx of funds that the Expo 2015 has brought to Milan has led to the creation of several new residential neighbourhoods and many areas of the city have completely changed. The image that Milan has been promoting for this large-scale event has been that of a rich European economic capital focused on finance, fashion and luxury. However, this transformation has triggered a sort of ‘cleaning process’ during which elements that do not fit in this image are removed from the city. Rather than taking the unique opportunity that the Expo 2015 has provided Milan to implement inclusive social policies and urban development projects that deal with the city’s housing emergency, Milan has once again attempted to conceal, destroy and rebuild all that does not conform to its public image.
What will you be, other than a concentrate of wounds swarming with insects and twisting diseases. What are you, Caliban, son of Siculoax, vomited to light and soaked in your own vomit.

Who did you kill on your path?
Who did you eat?
Who did you vomit?
Who did you rape?
Who did you torture?
Who did you enslave, spewing out the same promise they spewed on you, to make you a slave?

I wake up... (screams... screams of fear, screams of terror...)
Ca... Cal... Caliban... Where have you gone?

(I look at myself... the terror increases)

Nothing
No one
Just me
I am the monster
I wake up in vomit

The vomit of Caliban
Ah, mother! What did you do to deserve a monster, your daughter.
What a sin you have committed mother, Siculoax, mother of all mothers.
Even if it was the worst of all sins, why did you allow your sacred womb to spit out a monster like myself upon the Earth.

This voice, mother! This voice sounds like the rattle of a mouse!
This body, which even the hungriest of men and women wouldn’t dare to touch, mother!

So what? So I give myself pleasure, I wake up with my raped, violated, bled out genitals, tortured with my own twisted hands.
The blood spilling genital is here, close to me, I tore it off, not to feel pleasure anymore, not to wish for it ever again, not to live in the horror to be unwished for.

Ah, the dream! That hand which offered me that piece of ill, blood dripping flesh, was offering me a piece of myself. And the hand offering it was my own hand.

Ah, what do I say! Why do I keep addressing to you as if you were some other than me?

We are two bodies in one body, we are two bodies which tangled not to throw themselves in a dump, in order to survive despite of their undesirable and repulsive being.

Ah, Siculoax! Careless and deviated mother, why didn’t you kill me when I first saw the light, why didn’t you spare me the beastliness of laying down with myself, the atrocity of sharing my life with no one else but this monster, the inconsolable pain of not populating this island with a score of Calibans?

Siculoax, mother of mine, hated and beloved mother. I condemn you because you didn’t kill me, I condemn you because you let me live.
Uninhabited Island situated The City Ghettos of Today in the Berlin site-specific context of a rapidly changing city, from the 'Cinderella' of European capitals back in the 1990s to the present ‘place to be’. The focus was placed on the urban and social changes which are currently affecting the city, such as gentrification and the resulting displacement of low-income inhabitants, often including those with a migration background. Former immigrant and poor districts often associated with the idea of ‘ghetto’, like Kreuzberg or Neukölln, have received unprecedented hype and developed into magnets for tourists and real estate investors during the last five years. Over the course of this, these districts, once the furthest limits of West Berlin and now central districts in the reunified German capital, have been increasingly populated by a new wave of immigrants. These newcomers, primarily from comparatively rich Western countries, active in the creative industries and often using English, not German, as a working language stand in stark contrast both to the pre-war German residents of Kreuzberg and Neukölln as well as the first wave of post-war immigrants, coming primarily from Turkey. The local partners OnElif Theater and Performance Collective and the English Theatre Berlin / International Performing Arts Center together with the international artistic team of The City Ghettos of Today invited, through an open call, an heterogeneous group of participants based in Berlin, ‘old’ and ‘new’ Berliners, from Germany and from beyond, to work and reflect on the changing living and social conditions in the city. Starting from the stories and biography of the participants as a representative ‘sample’ of contemporary Berliners and in a provocative relation with one another, a collective, controversial and lively portrait of the city was created.
The City Ghettos of Today in Berlin: Uninhabited Island

While William Shakespeare’s The Tempest was the common textual reference for performances in other cities, we decided to consider the broader notion of an Uninhabited Island as the focus of the Berlin residency. The allusion to the island in The Tempest, this Uninhabited Island became a general metaphor for the city of Berlin as a place of arrival for successive waves of migrants who, over time, have progressively shaped the face of the city.

With this metaphor as a starting point, our explorations of ‘ghettos’ in Berlin revealed the extent to which areas that used to be home to these migrant populations have, over time, transformed into more diversely populated neighbourhoods. What is more, the popular reputations of these areas have shifted from being predominately negative to describing desirable ‘hipster’ areas. The following anonymous testimony from one of the project’s workshop participants reveals this transformation from a more personal point of view:

When I moved to Berlin 9 years ago looking for a place to stay I ended up finding an apartment in Neukölln. Every time I told somebody that I lived there, people would stare at me: are you crazy? You live in NK? That is the ghetto of Berlin! Of course nothing bad ever happened to me and I enjoyed living in this forgotten and unpopular part of the city. Things have changed radically since then. Neukölln nowadays is defined as the place to be and as a ‘hipster mecca’ by Easyjet Magazine and during the last five years rents have increased by more than fifty percent.

From this perspective, the word ‘ghetto’ no longer seemed like an appropriate way to identify these former poor migrant districts. As a result, the local team chose the term ‘post-ghetto’ as a starting point and inspiration for our artistic research into the Uninhabited Island of Berlin.

In the text that follows, Berlin’s OnElf Theatre Collective will present the different phases of the project by presenting a series of fragments that were selected to represent different moments throughout this process. These fragments include: the text of the open call for participants, reactions to this open call that we received via email, interviews with different participants, excerpts from the final performance and other related materials.

OPEN CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS
The following open call for participants was written in German and in English and diffused both online and as a printed flyer in cafes, bars, cultural associations and on the street...

Looking for Participants for a THEATRE PROJECT at English Theatre Berlin | International Performing Arts Center

BERLIN IS CHANGING.
TELL YOUR STORY OF BERLIN!
Were you born here and feel threatened by ways in which the city has changed? Is Berlin a paradise to you where you can make your dreams come true? Did you live here before the fall of the Berlin Wall?

1.

Dagmara: The thought of escaping to Germany was constantly on my mind. I was suffocating under the communist regime in Poland forcing their ideology on us. Independent thought was forbidden. Janina: I arrived in Berlin in 1991 for Christmas holidays. I was not supposed to be there, my sister had come back to Poland and asked me to fill in for her until she came back. Jolanta: I got an apartment with my delegation... Włodzimierz: ...a steady job. Jolanta: Yes, yes... I did not have to worry about everyday existence. Dagmara: I came to Berlin with a plan to start my life over. I knew my marriage was not going to work and I did not have freedom... I wanted to stay in Germany. Janina: I was a homemaker... I was working hard... cleaning, cooking... and there was my 16 year old daughter giving me stress, coming from night clubs late at night... there was no father... I said that it is enough. I would try to do it by myself...

Jolanta: My husband got a job in the Embassy. This made our situation even more stable, I worked in the airport.

Janina: I worked as a cleaning lady. The employer said I was the best ‘putsfrau’ they ever had, and that reference letter would be filled with superlatives. I felt like I was given a diploma. Dagmara: I was active in language groups, strengthening my German. I wanted to learn English as well, but I had to work, there was no time.

Jolanta: One thing that struck me as odd, was when I walked my daughter to her school. The teacher opened the door, the class was filled with Asian and African kids. I was concerned how in the world would the teacher communicate with such a multicultural class? Janina: When I ordered a telephone line for my place, service men came but I did not open the door fearing they may be immigration agents. I held my breath and waited for them to go away.

Jolanta: During school... daily, wealth of words, my daughter showed us her homework, so all kids understood the teacher! How this lady communicated with these children is a miracle for someone like me!

Dagmara: After some time I noticed something about myself, I told myself I am a new human being, I have learned to live anew. I have learned to think in a completely new way. What a wonderful emotion, feeling it was when I realized ‘I am free!’ Włodzimierz: I remember one worry, when our daughter brought a 2 from a test, a failing grade in Poland. Then we realized with relief the grading system in Germany is opposite to ours, 1 is excellent and 5 fail.

Janina: Berlin became my home when I met my husband here, a German. Gunter was the reason I felt at peace.

Dagmara: First time in my life I knew what freedom felt like. I never did any spontaneous things before. I ran out on the street. Seemingly my life was in pieces and was 60 years old, starting everything over at 60 is not easy.

Janina: When I got married, my husband said ‘Stop!’ You have worked hard all of your life. I will not let you work anymore, you are my wife and you can afford to stop working’, that is when I became a proper homemaker. Dagmara: You can not give up, you have to get up and start working, be active, be yourself. I am happy to live in Berlin, my freedom started here.

Janina: I am Polish, but I want to stay here, Berlin is my home I want to stay here until the end.

Janina, Dagmara, Jolanta, Włodzimierz / Poland-Germany

Uninhabited Island

The Tempest

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Passing by your add I am repulsed. We see Berlin as an island. Did you bring the island-memtality or did you develop the mental blunder while strolling the ever exited streets of the fiction called Berlin?

It’s nowhere close to being an island… I would very much appreciate a little more subtly and empathy for what you find when you go to places.

And forgive me for saying this, but it has come to this point: English neo-colonialism will not work in Berlin, nor anywhere else...

Thank you for your worthwhile contribution to the changing of what you call island. Perhaps you do envision an island; an island of English in a German Sea. Great Vision.

All the best.

Yiannis

Hello,
I am a woman (29) and just moved a week ago from Amsterdam to Berlin. Looking for a job and fully enjoying the vibes, people and places of this city.

That’s my story.
And I am interested in cooperating on your project.
Could you tell me more about it or will there be a meeting / briefing?

Thank you,
Best regards,
Marjolein

Hi there,
sounds like a cool project!
I am a Korean girl (22y) living in Berlin since two months. I would love to join!!!
I could either tell my story in Korean or English.
Whatever u prefer.

Hope hearing from you!
Cheers,
LISA

This open call eventually attracted participants of varying ages and nationalities who had lived in Berlin for varying lengths of time. The most recent arrival had only been in the city for a week while another participant had lived in the city for more than twenty-five years. Below a list of some of participants that reveals the extent of their national diversity:

- Mehmet Ballikaya (Turkey), Marjolein de Man (Netherlands), Magdalena Diercks (Poland), Janina Dresp (Poland), Akbar Haghabaei (Iran), Lisa Kim (Korea), Dimitra Rounadi (Greece), Dagmara Lisocka (Poland), Andrea Lohmann (Germany), Vanessa Machowetz (Germany), Yiannis Pappas (Greece), Alexandrine Perea (France), Bettina Sauer (Germany), Shua (Chile), Jolanta Sieranska (Poland), Wlodzimierz Sieranski (Poland), Akbar (Iran).

Together with the international team, this group participated in the different stages of the Berlin residency of The City Ghettos of Today, which included: a practical theatre workshop (role-play, creative writing session, improvisation with body and text, group discussion, public space intervention); a public debate on the role that art and artists play in processes of gentrification, and a performance, which took place at the English Theatre Berlin International Performing Arts Center.

Rather than creating a ‘finished’ performance, the workshop was intended to bring the local participants and international team together to create a collaborative work-in-progress that would then be shown to a public audience at the English Theatre Berlin. During the workshop, each participant shared his or her stories, anecdotes, fears and dreams about Berlin. Different perceptions about the city and ambivalent feelings changes that were currently taking place emerged: how can I criticize the changes to which I am also contributing? Am I a part of this gentrification? Am I the problem or am I the solution?

The following text is an example of the material that was produced during these encounters. It was written by Magdalena Diercks and describes her initial arrival in Berlin from Poland and her first impressions of the city. This text, which was written in English, became part of the final workshop presentation.

Sorry that I am writing to you only now. I've...
been in the middle of moving and consumed with renovations of my live-in studio for countless months. It seems impossible for a Berliner to avoid a construction site at the beginning. In the hallway, cables are poking out of the fuse box. The electrician pulled a plastic bag over his head and knocked through the wall. He wasn't able to make an airshaft because of the paintings in the rooms next door. He still told me how great he finds it when someone is an artist because talent is a wonderful thing. He was complaining about the arbitrary East German electrical installation.

I think the live-in studio is beautiful! It is, in fact... However, this beauty is completely hidden behind traces of a lengthy abuse that the building suffered over the last decades. After Reunification someone did a quick renovation and, to my astonishment, plastered over woodchip wallpaper. I wanted a pre-war building and now I'm living in a building with history, the history of the neglected building stock and the story of all the big and little fishes, all the hustlers stalking a rental building like this to grab a piece of the pie from the boom of the rising neighbourhood.

I'm waiting for a dust-free day to unpack my paintings from their shrouds. In the middle of all the boxes, I feel surrounded and as I boxed up myself. The apartment is omnipresent. I wanted to move into it so that I can paint here. It has placed me into a fervent frenzy where I continue to discover details requiring restoration...

While much of the workshop took place in the theatre space, there were also activities that took place outside of the theatre in form of collective excursions and individual 'challenges'. The aim of these 'challenges' was to undertake unfamiliar activities in order to overcome possible 'personal ghettos', or preconceived ideas about ghettos or their possible inhabitants. The following is an excerpt of one participant’s reflections on the significance of ‘ghettos’ in Berlin today, given in response to specific questions posed by the Berlin project team on the subject;

The word ‘ghetto’ provokes different associations. How do you understand this term? Do you think that there are ‘ghetto’ in Berlin nowadays?

Bettina Sauer: When I hear the word ghetto I think of people who only make use of certain parts of a city, either because they are pushed to those parts or because they want to separate themselves.

In Berlin, there were always quarters where mainly richer people have lived. Recently they are
 accomPPonied by additional ‘luxury and townhouse ghettos’ in former working class districts. Some of them have fences and security staff. Apart from that, Berlin is dramatically changing because of gentrification. People who cannot pay the raising rents have to move far away, into the poor suburbs. For me, this gentrification process is also a form of generating ghettos. In Berlin we wanted to bring diverse groups of people representing different ‘waves of migration’ together to explore how the city is changing and what impact these changes have had on life in Berlin. What kind of migrant are you? What is your perspective on some of the central themes that have been a successful experiment, there were never-never a number of challenges that arose during this phase in the project. The main challenge during these workshops was negotiating a common working strategy between the Berlin artistic team and the international team, accommodating different artistic approaches and trying to find common ground. As indicated above, the workshop led to a final workshop presentation at the English Theatre Berlin. Daniel Brunet, the Theatre’s Producing Artistic Director, hosted this final performance. We asked Mr Brunet to express his motivations for getting involved with the project and to elaborate on his perspective on some of the central themes that The City Ghettos of Today touched upon during its passage through Berlin. He responded as follows. What were your expectations and motivations in taking part and being the host of the European project The City Ghettos of Today? Daniel Brunet: When I became Producing Artistic Director of English Theatre Berlin in December 2012, I reimagined the institution as an international performing arts center with a working language of English, the 21st century lingua franca. International projects like The City Ghettos of Today were exactly the sort of collaborations I began to seek out from this point onward, both individually within my own artistic practice as a performer and theatre maker and from an institutional perspective. While my work includes directing in traditional theatrical paradigms, I have found myself yearning for a different kind of collaborations in more open structures in recent years. The opportunity to serve as a core member of the local project team alongside the theatre collective OnElf for several months and to then spend ten days of intense work with the international team produced exactly the kinds of exciting, dynamic artistic exchanges that I had hoped would take place when I was initially approached about the project in July 2014. From an institutional perspective, participating in this project allowed us to continue to serve our core mission as a place where the international community can come together to examine, investigate, explore, debate and discuss Berlin and its past, present and future using the tools of theatre and performance. Indeed, with nearly thirty direct participants, an additional twenty research partners and an audience of more than seventy, this project brought over one-hundred Berliners and guests of the city together to focus a critical lens on an important societal issue, all of which took place using a working language of English. The word ‘ghetto’ provoked some resistance and tense reactions when we initially approached people in Berlin with the subject during the research phase of the project. Why do you think this was the case? DB: The word ‘ghetto’ is charged with hundreds of years of history and has an almost overwhelmingly negative connotation. Its etymology stems from the district where Jews were forced to live in the sixteenth century Venetian Republic and quite literally means a part of a city by a minority group or groups live due to societal, financial or legal pressure. These areas are often the least-desirable parts of the cities in which they are located and the groups that live there are generally forced to do so. In the last two or three decades, the word ‘ghetto’ has come to be used as an adjective in...
addition to its original use as a noun: it connotes something shabby or of poor quality. While the hip-hop community in the United States has made great strides in reclaiming and repurposing the word as a source of pride, it retains an inherently negative association. The conscious use of this problematic term in the name of the project served as a useful provocation for examining processes of integration and inclusion in contemporary European metropolises and asking essential questions about where societies are today in comparison with where they were in sixteenth century Venice.

In Berlin we choose to focus on areas, which had, in the past, been shaped by migration and which are now shaped by equally strong processes of gentrification. The project managed to bring together a diverse group of participants that we saw as being a representative sample of Berlin today. However, there were groups that we were not able to reach.

Which groups did you feel were most missing from this project and why?

DB: Over the course of the project, we spoke repeatedly about three waves of settlement in our focus areas of Kreuzberg and Neukölln: the ‘original’ German working class inhabitants, guest workers that were brought into West Berlin in the 1960s and 1970s and the current immigrants working primarily in the creative industries who come from a wide variety of comparatively wealthy Western nations. While our ultimate group of participants included a broad cross-section of the second two categories, we were unable to find representatives of the first. Indeed, the perspective of German inhabitants with regard to the wholesale transformation of their neighborhoods, both on a linguistic and economic level, is one that is often left out of the current gentrification debate. It is also a perspective that proved to be quite illuminating in our research. For example, when speaking with Die Sultaninen, a Neukölln-based, German-language community theatre group of senior citizens that is composed of Germans and non-Germans, the firsthand experience of a German woman regarding her gradual alienation from her own district represents a perspective that I missed deeply in our final performance.

In your opinion, what was the project in Berlin’s main achievement?

DB: The main achievement of the project was its ability to bring artists, workshop participants and audience members from over a dozen different countries together to critically discuss our shared city while providing an opportunity for multiple perspectives on an important, volatile topic to be shared.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Speaking on behalf of the Berlin project team, we completely agree with Daniel Brunet’s statement that one of the main achievements of the project was to form a temporary community composed of very diverse people who probably otherwise would have never come into contact with one another. The topic of the project served as a trigger that generated new insights on the city and on the gentrification processes affecting it. It was through this useful and fruitful confrontation with others that each participant became more aware of her/his position and their own role in the changing city.

It was our aim to use those results for an artistic process and to bring the ‘struggle’ of the Uninhabited Island on stage. Given the short time frame of 12 days and the fact that the parts involved were so diverse and had different artistic approaches, it was clear for us that the final aim was not to present a finished and perfect performance to the audience but to offer them insight into the process by presenting them with fragments of different voices and stories. At present, we don’t know what will happen to these stories or if they will really have a long-term impact on the complex debate about gentrification in Berlin, or if they will merely become just another story that audience members hear, transform and transmit to others. What we do know is that members of the temporary community of participants that was created during this process are eager to become closer friends, to stay in contact and to keep on sharing.
In *Under Sail The City Ghettos of Today* project explored many nationalities living together in a limited territory. The project team used the metaphor of a ship to ask questions about the relationship between the inhabitants and their city and the interrelationship between the nationalities. How did they feel entering the ship, how did they feel during the journey and where should the ship sail to?

Antwerp is a city with super-diversity. Multiple nationalities live together in different areas of the city. Some areas are known to be the arrival areas, areas where newcomers arrive and have to start a new life, together with people who have lived there for years and generations. The ship resembles the city as a crowded entity that has to sail in the direction the passengers decided to.

The local organizer of the project – kunstZ has an academy where people of Antwerp from different origins have the chance to get an education in theatre and performance. The students of this academy became the passengers of this metaphorical ship whose journey and future was explored by the public of the final performances. The performances took place on the 8th floor of the MAS - a museum that looks over the city and the port of Antwerp.
In Antwerp, we chose to use the concept of ‘super diversity’ instead of using the concept of ‘ghetto’ as the focal point for our project residency. The term ‘ghetto’ evokes theoretical problems and strong emotional reactions in Antwerp that are primarily related to the common understanding that a ghetto is a homogenous community that lives in a spatially enclosed area. Antwerp contains several spatially closed-off districts. However, these districts are characterised by their diversity rather than by their homogeneity, which is due in part to the fact that they contain a high percentage of migrants. An area on the left bank of the Scheldt River known as the Antwerpen Linker Oever is the clearest example of this phenomenon. Separated from the city centre by the river, this district is home to individuals from more countries than any other neighbourhood in Antwerp. The most diverse neighbourhood in this area is known as the 2060 district, which refers to the area’s postcode in the north of the city. Unlike migrant districts in other European cities that are situated outside of the urban centre, the 2060 district is close to the centre of Antwerp in an area that is only a five-minute walk from the central railway station and the diamond district. While the 2060 provides an example of the degree to which migration has contributed to Antwerp’s ‘super diversity’, it is one of many ‘arrival neighbourhoods’ that have been home to migrants from a diverse range of backgrounds for years and even generations. Newcomers arrive in such neighbourhoods every day, which also house the vast majority of all Antwerp’s migrated populations. Indeed, out of every six newcomers to Antwerp arrive in the 2060 and one out of every four non-EU newcomers arrives in the same neighbourhood. These neighbourhoods’ status as ‘arrival neighbourhoods’ has been effective in contributing to solidarity in these areas between newcomers and neighbourhood residents. However, this community solidarity oftentimes does not extend beyond the neighbourhood.

Alongside migrants having recently arrived in Belgium, young Belgians have also chosen to start families in these neighbourhoods due to the cheaper housing prices and the attraction of living in a culturally diverse area. Cultural organisations are also drawn to these neighbourhoods for similar reasons. By initiating projects and implanting their organisations in these areas, cultural organisations are simultaneously seeking to learn about the different nationalities that reside therein and to enhance cultural live within these areas. The city government has also been investing in these areas in order to improve the quality of life in such neighbourhoods, which has taken the

The City Ghettos of Today in Antwerp

Greet Vissers
– director and dramaturg in Antwerp

part of project. In 1992 she founded theater company Blue Four – now renamed Laika. For 10 years she performed the artistic direction of Blue Four. The productions Greet Vissers directed, were based on the work of William Shakespeare, Edmond Rostand, Octave Mirbeau, Truman Capote, Italo Calvino, Julian Barnes, Michael Ondaatje, Maguerite Duras and Roald Dahl.

For her direction of Octave Mirbeau’s A Chambermaid’s diary and her visual theater production for the youngest A Lady in the Cupboard she got the Signal price in 1993.

As a freelance director she works in Germany, Netherland and Switzerland.

In 2001 she received her degree in Theatre Academy of Maastricht (NL) as a tribute for her services to the world of theater.

In 2008 Greet Vissers created Genesis – a multicultural theatre project with 11 players of diverse cultural origins, 3 African percussionists and trumpeter and a Belgian Quartet. Genesis got the cutting edge award for the best theatre in 2007 in Belgium. This project is the start of kunstZ, a socio-artistic organization that build a bridge between artists of foreign origin and the Flemish performing arts. Vissers staged within this organization dramatic work of Shakespeare, Garcia Lorca and Eugene Ionesco. She works together with performers of various cultural origins.
CREATING UNDER SAIL

Antwerp was the last city to host The City Ghettos of Today project. As was the case in other participating cities, the Tempest served as a starting point for residency. However, while earlier editions placed their conceptual emphasis on one character (Warsaw/Miranda, Helsinki/Prospero, Paris/Caliban, Milan/Caliban), the Antwerp residency was inspired by the scene in The Tempest where Prospero invites the island’s migrants, people who had been living in Antwerp for years or only a few months and people from Europe, Asia, Africa and South America. This group became a symbol of Antwerp’s ‘super diversity’ and their experiences and expectations formed the gaze with which we collectively contemplated Antwerp’s future.

Before the start of the project, the group participated in ten training sessions with actor and coach Werner Kolf. A former student of drama at the Tunnelacademie Maastricht in the Netherlands, Werner is currently a guest lecturer in acting at the kunstZ Academy. Placing a strong emphasis on teamwork and focus, Werner led the group through physical exercises and voice training. Most workshop participants had had no experience in acting in front of an audience before.

During the first session, participants were asked to improvise using their relationship with the city of Antwerp as inspiration. This activity was extended during The City Ghettos of Today, which culminated in their writing love letters towards the city of Antwerp. These preliminary workshops served to bind the group of participants together, which ultimately led to productive and unselfconscious improvisational collaboration with the international artistic team under Pietro Floridia’s direction.

The international residency that followed these preliminary workshops was divided into two parts: the first five days were devoted to improvisation and the construction of participants’ materials, which included ideas, texts, dialogues and the end results of improvisations. During this phase, Julie Otsuka’s book The Buddha in the Attic served as a source of inspiration alongside The Tempest due to the former’s parallel narrative about people sailing to a new country and to a new life. Over the course of the last five days, the acquired material was compiled into theatre scenes. The theatre text was written by Tomasz Gromadka and Pietro Floridia and translated into Dutch. Alejandro Glarte wrote music to which the participants added songs from their different homelands. It was also during this final stage that Pietro took charge of the performance direction, placing the action in direct contact with the black plastic tubes that formed the tempest’s scenic design. Some images from former cities, including a raft made of tubes and a scene involving a birth, were appropriated from residencies in other cities and integrated into this new context.

kunstZ presented the performance at the MAS museum in Antwerp, which is devoted to showcasing the city’s rich cultural heritage. The museum is a visible landmark located on the frontier between the city and the port and is a path-breaking museum that exposes the stories of Antwerp residents with diverse backgrounds. The MAS actively works with the public, artists and other partners on national and international levels to ensure that all members of the public can access and even become involved in events taking place at the museum. For kunstZ, having the performance in the MAS was also a conscious statement in support of Antwerp’s ‘super diversity’ in that it fused both the heritage of multiculturalism with its future, represented during the project during the performance of Under Sail.

While the MAS’s devotion to valorising diversity and access to culture corresponded with the objectives of The City Ghettos of Today, its idyllic setting between the city and the port also made it an attractive location for the final performance. Within the museum the performance took place in a large space on the eighth floor called De Boulevard, which refers to the room’s spacious dimensions and to its position in the MAS as a kind of thoroughfare through which visitors must pass when visiting an exhibition. An open, accessible space that provided a panoramic view of the city and the port, De Boulevard became the inspirational setting of the performance.

The project’s location also allowed more than one hundred people to attend the final performance. People from the city’s cultural scene, community art world and the social sector were present. Journalists also covered the event; with the local newspaper De Gazet van Antwerpen and the local TV station ATV both covering the story. Beyond the cultural and journalistic sectors, Antwerp youth counselors and members of the board of Evens Foundation were present. Each participant had also invited friends and family to the performance. From this perspective, both the participants and the audience strongly represented Antwerp’s ‘super diversity’.

Today the Antwerp residency of kunstZ could shape Antwerp’s future.

The Tempest Antwerp residency was inspired by the scene in Shakespeare’s Prospero, Paris/Caliban, Milan/Caliban, the earlier editions placed their conceptual emphasis on different cities because of the cheaper house prices but, as a result, receive an inferior education compared to individuals living in more prestigious neighbourhoods, which results in an reduced possibility of finding employment. This issue of ‘psychological borders’ would later enter into discussions during the creation of Under Sail. The subject was also addressed during the seminar by Elise Shillebeeckx (University of Antwerp).
In total, over 300 attended the performance Under Sail.

In addition to the project workshops and performance at the MAS, The City Ghettos of Today’s Antwerp residency also proposed a seminar in its event programme. The seminar, entitled ‘Breeding grounds, new citizenship and art forms in urban diversity’, explored whether Belgium’s cultural sector was responding to the needs and realities of a modern, multicultural Antwerp. The seminar provided a platform for discussion between artists, cultural practitioners and researchers related to the specific challenges and opportunities that urban areas present in the arenas of social integration, solidarity and culture. The event included also a broader group discussion, which discussed the possible dynamics of working with and in a diverse society. Over the course of the seminar discussions, participants suggested that a number of elements of Antwerp’s cultural field did not reflect the realities of the city, and that it was time to adapt classical cultural spaces, organisational methods, schooling and cultural programming to reflect Antwerp’s ‘super diversity’ and to provide more access to these resources for all city residents.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Over the course of the Antwerp residency of The City Ghettos of Today, it became clear that the timeline proposed for the process was not sufficient to achieve the project’s performance goals. To begin with, participants only had three days to study and learn the new material provided by the international team. As a result, the amateur actors did not successfully appropriate the text in a way that would have enabled them to perform in front of an audience. Similarly, since the content of this new material was similar to their earlier improvised material, the actors took the opportunity to improvise during the performance itself, which led to a loss of clarity. The texts that the international team proposed, such as Michel de Certeau’s ‘L’invention du quotidien: Arts de faire’ did however broaden the performance’s focus beyond the individual perspectives of the participants. However, the inexperienced actors struggled to bring such texts to life on stage in a credible way in the timescale provided. Despite these obstacles the kunstZ group's biggest strength was its charisma and physical power, which contributed to the dynamic energy of the performance. The intense workshops working towards a performance were also a unique experience for the participants, most of whom had never experienced this kind of working process before.

Beyond the participants, the artistic international group had to work hard to transform the material that participants created through workshop improvisations into usable material for the performance. This process demanded time that could otherwise have been devoted to coach the participants-actors to appropriate the material. This situation could have been improved if there was more time planned between the collection of material and the final performance.

As The City Ghettos of Today’s final European residency, the Antwerp edition revealed a number of factors that could potentially improve similar collaborative projects between actors in different European cities. For a start, problems related to the timeframe could have been avoided by collecting all of the content material prior to the first workshop with the international team. Rather than creating new material during the workshops, the international team could then process and transform this material into a more theatrical form. In addition, these workshops between local participants and the international team do not necessarily need to result in a final performance. This would allow teams in every city to work on its own piece with material developed during the workshops and eventually work towards a public performance. By extending the working process, the performances could potentially become more polished and acquire more depth.

In Antwerp, kunstZ: 03 344 27 88
CHANGE YOURSELVES

Change yourselves!
Change yourselves! - they said so.
In what sense ‘change yourselves’?
We need to change our clothes?
Change yourselves. No questions!
Why? - we asked.
Because like this you are not right,
like this you can’t enter the ship.
Are we so different?
I don’t know. I know you are not right.
The one who enter the ship has to be able to adapt, to change himself. You
have three minutes. There is no space for all of you. If everybody enter the
ship sinks. Change yourselves. This is the password. Change yourselves.
Three minutes and then we’ll choose who enter the ship. Go!

Because like this you are not right.
Like this you can’t board the ship.
Are we so different?
I don’t know. I know you are not right.

YOU ARE COLD DEAR!

Dear, before I met you I was thinking you were kind, sensitive,
intellectual… Actually, not that intellectual but cultivated.

Yes, yes, that is the right word: cultivated.
Do you know something? Before I met you some friends of mine were
telling me ‘don’t have great expectations’ – do you know why?
Because… Oh! I don’t know whether I should say that… They said that
you were cold! And boring!

You? Boring? No way! This relationship is full of ups and downs,
ups and downs, ups and downs – like an elevator!

I remember when I came to you – because I came to you – it was sunny,
but you were cold. Yes! You are always cold! …Ops sorry, let’s talk about
our good memories. Yes, I do have good memories, of course!

I will always remember our first time in a theatre. Do you remember it?
I’m asking you – do you remember it? Of course not! Because I have to
remember everything! Ops sorry… Yes, our first day at the theatre!

At Toneelhuis! Choreographies, costumes, the stage, everything was
amazing and I was watching the performance like a kid – for me that
experience was very special! And suddenly, you began to talk!

Of course, we were at the theatre and you had the need to talk.
And again I couldn’t understand any single word! Nothing! But you didn’t
care! Again! You couldn’t understand that finally you destroyed one of the
best moments of my life – our first time at the theatre!
And I was thinking ‘Oh! It’s all Greek to me!’ . It’s funny, eh?

Nevertheless, for me it’s not that funny!

I gave you my dreams, my soul, my body, I was naked in front of you, but
you were always suspicious… You were always asking me about this
and that. It was obvious, you couldn’t trust me. Do you remember what
you told me just few months after our meeting? When I proposed you
to make a project together at the University of Antwerp?
‘I cannot collaborate with you – not yet – because you are a political
scientist and I am a lawyer’.

‘Yes, but I have attended many law classes for my Bachelor degree
– Constitutional law, International law’.

‘No, I need some time… because I don’t know whether you stay or whether
you leave me in one year’.

Are you crazy? Are you fucking crazy? Do you know what have I sacrificed
for you? Do you know? I have sacrificed my friends, my family, my home,
my safety… the sun! Yes, the sun. Because do you know something?
Now I’m sure, you are cold! And at the end I didn’t want to marry you,
I just wanted to spend some time together – nothing more, nothing less.
But I was wrong! You are the coldest choice I’ve ever made!
**PIETRO FLORIDIA**  
**Artistic director**
Founder and artistic director of the Compagnia del Teatro dell’Argine. Theater director, writer, theater teacher. Creator of the intercultural projects of Teatro dell’Argine – of theater and artistic activities involving migrants and refugees living in Bologna, Italy. Since 1994 directs performances with professional and nonprofessional actors. In recent years combines theater and visual arts. Creates theater performances based on the artistic installations (La Strada di Paca, Report dalla città fragile) and experiments with the public involvement in art. Develops projects – bridges between migrants living in Italy and people and organizations from their home countries (Teatro in viaggio – travels and documents his travels by writing blogs, books and directing performances based on the travel experiences. Directed performances and ran workshops in Italy, Bolivia, Brazil, Sweden, Poland, Palestine, Senegal, Belgium. In 2012 established the Compagnia dei Rifugiati (now Cantieri Metici Company) – theater company involving professional and non-professional actors from more than 15 countries – migrants, refugees and Italians.

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**ALICJA BORKOWSKA**  
**Project coordinator, theater trainer, direction assistant**
The president of Strefa WolnoSłowa foundation. Coordinator of theater projects, director, expert in the field of theatre (MA in art at The Aleksander Zelwerowicz Theatre Academy in Warsaw). She studied in DAMS department at Bologna University, where she also successfully completed an ATER Formazione one postgraduate course in multicultural events organization. She took part in organizing many theatre festivals in Poland and abroad. For many years she worked for Teatro dell’Argine/ITC Teatro in Bologna, where she coordinated multicultural projects and ran theatre workshops for immigrants and refugees. For many years she has been running theatre workshops for kids, teens and adults in schools, theaters, social and cultural centres in Poland, Italy, Sweden, Bolivia, Palestine, France. Apart from the theatre, her work involves photography and video animation. She made several animated films and installations for theatre plays at Teatro dell’Argine. Alicja is the originator and coordinator of Strefa WolnoSłowa’s theatre projects, within which she runs workshops and directs performances.

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**LUIS ALEJANDRO OLARTE**  
**Sound designer**
The electroacoustic musician devoted to pedagogy, live performance and digital lutherie. His studies have included classical and electroacoustic music, generative improvisation and musical acoustics in conservatories in Paris and Colombia. At the moment he is a doctoral candidate developing pedagogical tools for live electronics and improvisation at the Center for Music and Technology in the Sibelius Academy in Finland. He works as freelance artist in Helsinki, combining cross-disciplinary collaborations, composing, performing and teaching.

The role of Luis Alejandro Olarte in The City Ghettos of Today project included work as sound artist in the creation of the installation, workshop plans and also participating in the decisions of the planning team both in the national and international project.

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**MAREK PLUCIENNIK**  
**Author of the videos for installation**
Marek Pluciennik is a filmmaker and videomaker living in Helsinki since the mid 90s. In 2010 he joined forces with sound artist James Andean to form Plucie des Andes. Among many shows in Helsinki the duo premiered their work at Stockholm Fringe Festival 2012, as well as in Aave Festival 2013 in Helsinki, Perf13 Performance Festival in Pori. As a member of Research Group in Interdisciplinary Improvisation in Helsinki Marek currently explores intuitive filming practices in performance based on art. His films and videos have been screened in international film festivals and contemporary art galleries in Poland, Sweden, Hungary, Toronto and Finland. He is one of the founding members of Catalyst Transcultural Artists in Finland and board member of Ptarmigan artist run cooperative.

In The City Ghettos of Today Marek Pluciennik participated as film artist both in the international and national project team and took part in all stages of planning.

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**TOMASZ GROMADKA**  
**Dramaturg**
Member of the Strefa WolnoSłowa foundation, coordinator responsible for contacts with schools and other institutions. He graduated from The Aleksander Zelwerowicz Theatre Academy in Warsaw, where he obtained MA in art. For the last few years he has worked as a journalist specializing in art and culture, especially the theatre and TV series. He cooperates with daily newspapers and monthlies. The dramaturg of Exile Warsaw, and the author of texts for performances such as The Grass is Greener Here, I’l Bring my Backyard Here, I Cannot stay Here, After all. He runs theatre workshops for kids, teens and adults, and is the co-author and co-coordinator of Strefa WolnoSłowa’s theatre projects.

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**LINDA FAHSSIS**  
**Theater trainer, dramaturgy assistant**
Founder and artistic director of Cie Check Points. She graduated in 2008 at the National School of Music, Dance and Drama of Noisy-le-Grand. She performed and toured in a series of master classes with major European directors such as Sophie Lucatchevsky, Akel de Booseré, Patrice Thibault, Claude Buchvald and Mourad Mansouri. She has acted in ‘elements of master classes’ of major European directors. She started her own independent theater company Exile Warsaw. She directed Exile Warsaw, and the author of texts for performances such as The Grass is Greener Here, I’ll Bring my Backyard Here, I Cannot stay Here, After all. He runs theatre workshops for kids, teens and adults, and is the co-author and co-coordinator of Strefa WolnoSłowa’s theatre projects.

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**MADE IN COSMOS STUDIO**  
**Graphic design**
Katarzyna Muranty and Łukasz Sawicki, graphic designers team from Warsaw. Both graduated from Warsaw Academy of Arts - Lech Majewski master class. Members of STGU association. Posters, books, illustrations, digipacks, web design, identity design - that is their work field. They work with Strefa WolnoSłowa for over three years. Made in Cosmos created whole identity of The City Ghettos of Today project.

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