Transculturality, Postmigration, and the Imagining of a New Sense of Belonging

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Fig 1: DE-HEIMATIZE IT! *(The title of the fourth Berlin Autumn Salon), 2019, on the facade of the Maxim Gorki Theater: Container, Berlin. Photograph: Anne Ring Petersen.*

Snapshot One: In October 2019, the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin—the hub of German postmigrant theater—held their *4. Berliner Herbstsalon* (Fourth Berlin autumn salon) under the thought-provoking title *DE-HEIMATIZE IT!.*[1] The *Herbstsalon* is an integrated platform for theater, performance, visual art, and academic debate. In the opening lecture of the 2019 session, sociologist Bilgin Ayata unpacked the idea of "deheimatization." Under the headline "De-heimatize Belonging," Ayata contested the increasingly common

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1 "4. Berliner Herbstsalon, Gorki," *4. Berliner Herbstsalon*, accessed January 28, 2020, https://www.berliner-herbstsalon.de/en/vierter-berliner-herbstsalon.

invocation of the term *Heimat* (home-place) in German politics and public debate, arguing that this word is infested with nationalist connotations and has been made irredeemable through its close association with Germany's fascist and colonialist history of violence. Shermin Langhoff, the artistic director of the Gorki Theater, answered Ayata's call for a reconceptualization of belonging. In her Editorial for the salon, she set the agenda for the event by linking the need for "deheimatization" to one of the great fault lines of German and, it could be added, other European societies: the deep rift that divides "natives" from "newcomers":

> "Heimat" is currently being projected in capital letters on every wall of the republic. But it's not being used in a sense of empathy and solidarity with the people who have had to flee their Heimat. On the contrary, Heimat is being used by right-wing and extreme right forces to exclude the dispossessed and disenfranchised.[2]

The appropriation of the campaigning style of political movements in the title *DE-HEIMATIZE IT!* (Fig. 1) resonated with that of the preceding salon in *2017: DESINTEGRIERT EUCH!* (Disintegrate yourselves!). The battle cry of the third salon echoed the title of German writer Max Czollek's eponymous collection of essays, *Des-integriert Euch!* (Disintegrate yourselves!).[3] Emerging from the Jewish scene, Czollek's controversial book and provocative dictum intervened in contemporaneous debates on integration and national belonging, including the question of Jewish diversity. Under polemical headlines such as "Integrationstheater! Leitkultur und Heimatministerien" (Theater of integration, lead culture, and *Heimat* ministries), Czollek launched an attack on what he dubbed the "theater of integration." The theater of integration, for Czollek, refers to a nationalistic narrative of post-World War II Germany which upholds the impression of an advanced society populated by a humane citizenry that has successfully curbed the virulent antisemitism which led to the Shoah/Holocaust, while conservative and extremist right-wing forces simultaneously celebrate the vision of *Heimat* as synonymous with a unified German culture purified of foreign elements. Czollek called out to individuals for whom social oppression has ascribed a minoritized position to defy the demand for integration and adaptation, and in doing so gestured towards an

2 The translator explains in a note on the website that "the German word *Heimat* is roughly translated as 'homeland' or 'home place' in English, but many have argued that it cannot be translated. It is also worth noting that the German Federal Ministry for the Interior, Building and Community has translated *Heimat* as 'community' in its English-language title." Shermin Langhoff, "Editorial," *4. Berliner Herbstsalon, Gorki*, accessed February 25, 2020, https://www.berliner-herbstsalon.de/en/vierter-berliner-herbstsalon/editorial.

3 Max Czollek, *Des-integriert Euch!* (München: Carl Hanser, 2018). All titles and quotations from texts in German and Danish have been translated by the author.

alternative vision of community, citizenship, and solidarity.[4] Drawing on the German discourse on postmigration,[5] Czollek's book thus condensed his vision into the concept of radical diversity (*radikale Vielfalt*), to which I will return below.

Snapshot Two: In November 2019, gigantic class photos of third-year pupils from London primary schools were displayed on 600 billboards posted at roadsides, railways, and underground stations across London's thirty-three boroughs. The scale was such that it was estimated that almost one in every ten people in the city would see at least one of the group portraits.[6] British artist and filmmaker Steve McQueen had selected these photos from his photographic project *Year 3*, which consists of group photos of London schoolchildren in their third year, pupils aged seven and eight years old. This is commonly understood by child psychologists to be a crucial age in a child's development, when children become conscious of the larger world beyond their family and thus develop an increased sense of identity. As Tate Britain's press release explained, "it is a critical time for them to develop confidence in all areas of life, to understand more about their place in a changing world and to think about the future. … *Year 3* reflects this moment of excitement, anticipation and hope."[7] The city-wide outdoor exhibition was organized by Artangel, the leading British organization for art in public space, and was scheduled to coincide with Tate Britain's opening of the exhibition of McQueen's project.[8] The outdoor and museum exhibitions of McQueen's *Year 3* formed perhaps the most ambitious visual portrait of citizenship undertaken in a large city. In total, the project involved seventy percent of London's schools, more than 3000, to

4 Czollek, *Des-integriert Euch!*, 75.

5 The discourse on postmigration has primarily been developed by academics in the social sciences and the humanities in Germany but is now gaining ground in neighboring countries such as Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, France, UK, and Canada.

6 "Press Release–11 November 2019," *Tate Britain*, accessed May 24, 2020, https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/steve-mcqueen-year-3.

7 Education specialists from the organization A New Direction played a key role in facilitating the creation of Steve McQueen's project. As explained in Tate Britain's press release, they led a major outreach campaign to recruit and engage primary schools and organized educational workshops centered on the project's key themes of identity and belonging. "Press Release–11 November 2019," *Tate Britain*, accessed May 24, 2020, https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/steve-mcqueen-year-3.

8 The billboard-based exhibition was made possible by a partnership between the artist, Tate Britain, Artangel, and the organization A New Direction in which the museum and the organizations acted as facilitators of a project conceptualized by the artist. "Press Release–11 November 2019," *Tate Britain*. No exhibition catalogue has been published. For images of *Year 3,* see: "Steve McQueen Year 3," *Tate Britain*, accessed May 24, 2020, https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/steve-mcqueen-year-3; and "Steve McQueen Year 3," *Artangel: Extraordinary Art, Unexpected Places,* accessed May 24, 2020, https://www.artangel.org.uk/year-3-project/.

make "a monumental collective portrait of more than 76,000 young Londoners alongside their classmates and teachers."[9] *Year 3* aspired to be a portrait of the next postmigrant generation and evoked the complexities of what it means to be British in today's multicultural Britain. The exhibitions thus presented a hopeful, embodied vision of the possibilities of living together in difference and a counter to the white nationalist far-right conspiracy theory "The Great Replacement," in which white Europeans are supposedly replaced through a government-sanctioned mass-immigration of Arabs and Africans.[10] In doing so, the exhibitions made a critical intervention into this politically mobilizing theory and method of fearmongering, which has become popular among anti-immigration ultra-right movements in the UK, Germany, France, and other European countries.

The *Berliner Herbstsalon*'s challenge to the bond between *Heimat* and citizenship, and McQueen's portrait of citizenry-to-come are both projects that engaged the public in a conversation about issues of identity, citizenship, community, and belonging. Moreover, they demanded years of persistent dedication to their artistic and curatorial concepts by the many actors involved in their creation. The Gorki Theater and McQueen each used the monumentality and publicness of artistic projects to draw attention to the demographic diversity of European populations and the deep and long-lasting transcultural entanglements that European communities share with places and people around the world. Accordingly, both projects point to an urgent need to rethink the traditional nationalist and monocultural notions of home-place, belonging, and "cultural citizenship" upon which European nation-states are founded.[11] This urgent need for change is perhaps most powerfully signaled by the politically mobilizing titles of the *Berliner Herbstsalons* and the grand

9 Javier Pes, "Steve McQueen's Photos of Thousands of London Third-Graders Have Triggered a Flood of Field Trips to Tate Britain," *Artnet*, November 12, 2019, accessed February 4, 2020, https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/steve-mcqueen-tate-third-graders-1701003.

10 This sentence employs Ien Ang's turn of phrase "togetherness in difference," which she used in her perceptive exploration of the disparate experiences that make up diasporic existence in multicultural Australia. Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001).

11 The term "cultural citizenship" is a translation of *medborgerskab*, which is often invoked in Danish discussions on democracy and democratic participation in culture and society. It is usually translated as cultural citizenship because there is no equivalent term in English (a direct translation of the word would be "co-citizenship"). I use the term cultural citizenship to refer to an expanded notion of citizenship and the ways in which the arts have taken an active part in the construction and dissemination of hegemonic notions of citizenship, e.g. through monuments, and literary works representing (white) model citizens and communities, as well as civic virtues and norms. What I want to stress here is that legal citizenship rights are part of a more complex set of affective relationships, collective identifications, material practices, and imaginative forms of participation in public life. It is these "cultural" relationships and practices that enable any sense of inclusive citizenship and of belonging as a citizen, and art plays a formative part in their production.

generational scale of McQueen's participatory project. These examples make evident the perspicacity and provocativeness with which art can intervene in public debate, and demonstrate how effectively art can unsettle naturalized perceptions at times when, as Paul Gilroy phrased it, the "tendency towards sameness … combines readily with culturalist nationalism and xenophobia to create a toxic mixture."[12]

The questions that these two projects invite us to ask are, therefore: How can art and culture contribute to the collective reimagining of cultural citizenship, home-place, and belonging? How do artists and cultural producers make critical interventions in public and societal debates, and how might these interventions provide counterhegemonic alternatives to nationalistic homeland orientation and boundary maintenance? Furthermore, how can scholars use the concepts of the transcultural, the diasporic, and the postmigratory to deepen our understanding of the role that these cultural and artistic expressions take in contemporary political struggles and the ways in which they strive for a new sense of belonging against hegemonic, monocultural notions of community and cultural citizenship?

Joining forces: notes on methodology

To answer these questions, I employ transcultural, diasporic, and postmigrant perspectives to explore contemporary imaginaries of community, collectivity, and belonging, as expressed through art in public space. I understand public spaces to be conflictual arenas, and, borrowing a term from philosopher Oliver Marchart, I perceive art in public space as a form of "conflictual aesthetics."[13] My study foregrounds the methodological question of how the transcultural and postmigrant approaches can be refined by critical considerations of the possibilities and limits of these concepts for art history. More specifically, I will consider how postmigrant and diasporic perspectives can be used to broaden the transcultural approach and how coupling the postmigrant, the diasporic, and the transcultural may overcome some of these limits. However, this endeavor entails navigating between Scylla and Charybdis: on the one hand, the postmigrant approach brings the risk of methodological nationalism due to the postmigrant focus on conflicts, conditions, and phenomena internal to the

12 Paul Gilroy, "Agonistic Belonging: The Banality of Good, the 'Alt Right' and the Need for Sympathy," *Open Cultural Studies*, no. 3 (2019): 2.

13 Marchart has aptly described art's methods of political disruption as "strategies of agitation." Together with acts of "propagating" and "organizing," agitating constitutes what Marchart terms "conflictual aesthetics." Marchart's term refers to the ways in which artists use aesthetic and activist means to respond to or contribute to social justice movements. His term denotes an aesthetics that is ontologically grounded in antagonism, and which is "conflictual in a double sense …, both a conflicting aesthetics and an aesthetics of conflict." Oliver Marchart, *Conflictual Aesthetics: Artistic Activism and the Public Sphere* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019), 23, see also 26, 30.

nation-state; on the other, the group-oriented approach to identity formation in anthropological and sociological diaspora studies is potentially homogenizing, yet has often provided the authorizing concept of transculturality used in art history.[14] This conceptualization of transculturality (drawn from diaspora studies) is, I suggest, counterproductive to studies of highly individualized practices of contemporary artists, because it is premised upon the idea that individual expression takes place within a general idiom: that of the ethnic or national group. The group-oriented concept of transculturality thus tends to sideline or even efface the idiosyncrasies and radical transgressions that often characterize contemporary artistic appropriation and use of inherited cultural idioms.

To meet this methodological challenge, I adopt in this article a two-pronged approach. On a theoretical and methodological level, I explore how the diasporic imaginary can be brought into productive interplay with postmigration (*das Postmigrantische*), another key concept in discussions on art and global migration. Postmigration holds that migration is an ongoing process that has irreversibly shaped Europe since the mid-twentieth century. As a result of this process, European societies are now struggling to learn how to accommodate the cultural diversity inherent in what recent scholarship has variously termed "migration societies,"[15] "postmigrant societies,"[16] and the "postmigrant condition."[17] Like the idea of the diasporic imaginary, postmigration has emerged at the intersection of global migration and transnationalization on the one hand and processes of re-nationalization on the other, including both deterritorialized diasporic nationalisms and territorial anti-immigration nationalisms. However, while the diasporic imaginary centers on a conception of the diasporic community as a historically stable racial or national group—thereby running the risk of reinforcing processes of othering—the discourse on postmigration focuses on the entanglements between societal groups and thus seeks to transcend the categorization of

14 See for example Cathrine Bublatzky's thorough analysis of the critical debates on the ways in which the works of contemporary Indian artists, including works by Indian diasporic artists, have been perceived and marketed as representations of Indianness and Indian culture in its entirety. Cathrine Bublatzky, *Along the Indian Highway: An Ethnography of an International Travelling Exhibition* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2019).

15 Tatiana Matejskova and Marco Antonsich, eds., *Governing through Diversity: Migration Societies in Post-Multiculturalist Times* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

16 Naika Foroutan, *Die Einheit der Verschiedenen: Integration in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft* (Osnabrück: Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien [IMIS] der Universität Osnabrück, 2015); Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft: Ein Versprechen der pluralen Demokratie* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2019).

17 Moritz Schramm, Sten Pultz Moslund, and Anne Ring Petersen, eds., *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts: The Postmigrant Condition* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

diasporas as separable minorities. This shift of perspective enables us to rethink the question of collective identity: how can collective identities be recast from the viewpoint of multiple belonging and transcultural exchange?

I will link this overarching theoretical and methodological discussion to a historically grounded and empirical study of contemporary art and culture in migration and postmigration contexts. As mentioned above, I focus on art in public spaces—spaces that are always fraught with differences and conflicts, whether latent or manifest. In order to provide an alternative to national frameworks for cultural analysis, I ask, firstly, what in our understanding would change if the diasporic and the postmigratory were imagined as the very conditions that enable the narration of collective identities? And, secondly, how can artists move the invariably friction-filled negotiations of such narratives "to the center" by using public spaces as sites for engaging a broad range of citizens in such negotiations?

I answer these questions by consideration of two art projects realized in Denmark, a country pervaded by re-nationalization processes and postmigratory struggles similar to those described above. The first project is photographer and curator Maja Nydal Eriksen's documentary art project *100% FREMMED?* (100% FOREIGN?) (2017–2019), a collective, intersectional immigrant history and portrait gallery composed of the life stories and images of 250 individuals who have been granted asylum in Denmark. The second is the *Superkilen* public park (Super Wedge, 2012), designed for the multicultural Nørrebro district in Copenhagen by the Danish artist group Superflex in collaboration with architects from Copenhagen-based Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) and Berlin-based Topotek 1. By way of these case studies, I seek to shed light on how art projects in public spaces can open up a social and national imagination pervaded by anxieties about immigration. I propose that precisely because public art can use popular modes of address to reach different types of people and publics (and not just art audiences), it has the potential to offer new points of identification to communities beyond monocultural nationalism. Here, I introduce the concept "postmigrant imaginary" to describe the postmigrant and transcultural sense of belonging and collective identity articulated by artworks as new points of identifications.[18]

18 As the main objective is to unpack a theoretical framework that combines transcultural, postmigrant, and diasporic perspectives, it is beyond the scope of this article to also discuss the definitions, theories, and problematizations of the vast field of scholarly research and critical debates on public art, community art, and activism. For some of the most compelling and influential theories and critical discussions, see: Sruti Bala, *The Gestures of Participatory Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012); Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002); Marchart, *Conflictual Aesthetics*; Marsha Meskimmon, *Transnational Feminisms, Transversal*

In what follows, I first unpack my theoretical framework. Here, I define the concepts transculturality, postmigration, and the diasporic imaginary. I then briefly consider whether this framework can be developed into an antidote to methodological nationalism and the dominating narratives about minorities and majorities in European societies. After this discussion, I turn to the art project *100% FREMMED?* to explore how it tackles this challenge. I then resume the theoretical discussion in order to consider the potential of the postmigrant imaginary for art history.[19] By way of conclusion, I turn to the *Superkilen* park project to examine how art can articulate a postmigrant imaginary in public space, and to demonstrate that the postmigrant imaginary has wider analytical relevance for the study of culture and the arts.

Transculturality, postmigration, and the diasporic imaginary

Transculturality and postmigration are compelling concepts through which to explore contemporary art. They both carry considerable descriptive, theoretical, and interpretive weight. Since the 2000s, the idea that art needs to be studied transculturally and transnationally has won increasing support among art historians. A significant example is the burgeoning research on "multiple modernisms."[20] Within and beyond art history, the *circulation* of art, artists, and art history itself has attracted increasing scholarly attention.[21] So has the idea of "diasporic art" and the ways in which artists have reimagined lives as migratory and cultures as interconnected.[22] Along with

Politics and Art: Entanglements and Intersections (London: Routledge, 2020); Malcolm Miles, *Art, Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures* (London: Routledge, 1997); Nina Möntmann, *Kunst als sozialer Raum: Andrea Fraser, Martha Rosler, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Renée Green* (Köln: Walter König, 2017); Nato Thompson and Gregory Sholette, *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* (Cambridge: MIT and Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004).

19 I am using the singular formulation only for rhetorical consistency in my theoretical consideration of the concept. Strictly speaking, a postmigrant imaginary may assume multiple different, if not contradictory forms, and may also be differentiated in relation to positionalities based on (intersectional) class, gender, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity.

20 See: Kobena Mercer, *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, Annotating Art's Histories Series (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005); Terry Smith, "Rethinking Modernism and Modernity Now," *Filozofski vestnik* 35, no. 2 (2014): 271–319; Kristian Handberg, "Multiple Modernisms: Curating the Postwar Era for the Present," in *Curatorial Challenges: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Contemporary Curating*, ed. Malene Vest Hansen, Anne Folke Henningsen, and Anne Gregersen (London: Routledge, 2019), 177–189.

21 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, eds., *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

22 On lives as migratory: Kobena Mercer, ed., *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers*, Annotating Art's Histories Series (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008); Kobena Mercer, "Erase and Rewind: When Does Art History in the Black Diaspora Actually Begin?," in *The Migrant's Time: Rethinking*

this development comes a growing awareness that a truly transcultural or "global" art history requires a set of revised methods and theories that move beyond the Eurocentric colonialist framework upon which the discipline was founded. What is at stake is more than the mere extension of scholarship to other regions. Rather, a substantial change in art history's frameworks requires the elaboration of explanatory paradigms that enable a consideration of multi-sited practices, palimpsestic temporalities, and the artistic use of manipulative strategies such as translation, mimicry, and substitution.[23]

Art historians Monica Juneja and Michael Falser have engaged critically with philosopher Wolfgang Welsch's concept of transculturality—defined as a profoundly syncretic and cosmopolitan product of the complex exchange between modern cultures—in order to develop a transcultural approach to the analysis of art and cultural heritage as focused on the connections and movements between regions and cultures.[24] Of relevance to the present study is their use of transculturality as an analytical lens that defines the object of study by the logic of entanglement: an approach that alternates between, as well as connects, local, national, regional, and global contexts and scales.

In a more recent study, Juneja has considered how art history may tap into the postcolonial foundations of transculturality. After scrutinizing the aspirations of some early pioneers of European world art history—a germinating transcultural approach to art history which sprung from the colonialist and Eurocentric perception of the world that dominated the nineteenth century—she turns to early postcolonial studies. From this, she creates a conceptual framework that combines a recognition of the inequalities and power structures involved in transcultural entanglement and keen attention to the "coevalness" between Western and non-Western artists. Her approach is in tune with the "intense proximity" that characterizes today's globalized, border-transgressing

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Art History and Diaspora, ed. Saloni Mathur (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2011), 17–31. On cultures as interconnected: Marsha Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2011); T. J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

23 Monica Juneja, "Circulation and Beyond–The Trajectories of Vision in Early Modern Eurasia," in *Circulation in the Global History of Art*, ed. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 59–77; Monica Juneja, "'A Very Civil Idea ...': Art History, Transculturation, and World-Making–With and Beyond the Nation," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 81, no. 4 (2018): 461–485.

24 Monica Juneja and Michael Falser, "Kulturerbe – Denkmalpflege: transkulturell. Eine Einleitung," in *Kulturerbe und Denkmalpflege transkulturell. Grenzgänge zwischen Theorie und Praxis*, ed. Monica Juneja and Michael Falser (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 17–34; Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality: the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today," in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194–213; Wolfgang Welsch, "Rethinking Identity in the Age of Globalization–a Transcultural Perspective," *Aesthetics & Art Science, Taiwan Association of Aesthetics and Art Science*, no. 1 (2002): 85–94.

art world and the multicultural societies within which most of the major art scenes are nested. Juneja traces the concept of transculturality to its origins in the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz's 1940 study *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*.[25] She then envisions a "transcultural art history" that may help art historians to "uncover synchronicity and coevalness" and to restore coevalness as the default entry point to cultural connections between Europe and other continents.[26] This approach may add nuance to our understanding of the many modalities of transcultural interaction and the asymmetries of power that condition these interactions.[27] Although transcultural studies builds on the groundwork of postcolonial analysis, transcultural studies is, Juneja submits, "a more fine-tuned method" that "seeks to avoid an overemphasis on polarities and oppositional structures by paying greater attention to the multiple relationalities that unfold beyond the colonizer–colony divide."[28] Similarly, postmigrant perspectives build on postcolonial analyses but also move beyond them as they seek to overcome the binary mode of thought that dominates postcolonial studies, as well as migration and diaspora studies, which often revolve around a juxtaposition between a majority society and a migrant or diaspora community.[29] However, such a binary mode of thought is profoundly difficult to overcome, and, as I am to propose, it is not possible to dispose of it completely.

Drawing on a decade of interdisciplinary transcultural research at Heidelberg University, Laila Abu-Er-Rub and her four co-editors have addressed the irresolvable paradox inherent in transculturality in their magisterial introduction to the comprehensive survey of transcultural studies, *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*:

> Transculturality is built on the understanding that cultures in the widest sense have never evolved as distinct entities or even primarily by interaction of separate units. … The syllable trans- (as opposed to, for instance, inter-) points in that transgressive and translatory direction: borders create border-crossing, in dividing they simultaneously connect. Ostensibly, there is a paradox at the heart of transculturality: in order to point to the transcultural, one first has to assume separate cultures, while simultaneously negating

25 Juneja, "'A Very Civil Idea ...'," 466–469.

26 Juneja, "'A Very Civil Idea ...'," 472, 474–476.

27 Juneja, "'A Very Civil Idea ...'," 469–471.

28 Juneja, "'A Very Civil Idea ...'," 471.

29 Regina Römhild, "Beyond the Bounds of the Ethnic: For Postmigrant Cultural and Social Research," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017): 69–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2017.1379850.

> their existence. Pointing to a "third" or a transitory and liminal space "in between", whose constitution and location can only be defined in relation and opposition to the self-contained units it professes to replace, cannot resolve this dilemma. Moreover, how can one deny what has been a real and defining element for human perception and human action—the nation, the ethnic group, the tribe?[30]

Arguably, the same dilemma is at the core of the paired terms diaspora and postmigration. Contrary to Abu-Er-Rub et al., who suggest that the paradox can be "dissolved by means of a conscious shift towards a processual, multi-sited perspective,"[31] I think we must acknowledge that the paradox can never be completely eradicated: Firstly, because the idea of self-contained communities produces real social effects, including community structures (as the editors themselves point out); secondly, because comparison (in this case between bounded and boundary-transgressing cultures) is essential to analytical thought process and cognition.[32] What scholars can do, therefore, is to mobilize transcultural and postmigrant perspectives to overturn the *hegemony* of the idea of bounded cultures, and challenge its position as the authoritative master signifier.

Abu-Er-Rub et al. also stress the importance of place-making and spatial imaginaries for transcultural perspectives, especially where diasporas and diasporic art are concerned.[33] As the anthropologist Brian Keith Axel has pointed out in his article "The Diasporic Imaginary," the study of diaspora has traditionally been based on an analytical model of place centered on the diasporic people's "place of origin,"[34] or, to be more precise, a correlation between the place of origin and a sense of displacement. Thus, in his article "The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora," the literary scholar Vijay Mishra has used the term diaspora to refer to "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or because of the political self-interest of a racialized nation-state, as a group that lives

30 Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and Susan Richter, "Introduction: Engaging Transculturality," in *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, ed. Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and Susan Richter (London: Routledge, 2019), xxvi.

31 Abu-Er-Rub et al., "Introduction," xxvi.

32 Susan Stanford Friedman, "Why Not Compare?," in *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, ed. Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 36.

33 Abu-Er-Rub et al., "Introduction," xxxiii.

34 Brian Keith Axel, "The Diasporic Imaginary," *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (2002): 411.

in displacement."[35] Arguably, living in displacement entails durational and evolving negotiations of spatial proximity and distance to the place of origin, as well as in the country of residence.

The secure position of the notion of bounded cultures as a master signifier, even within diaspora studies, is evidenced by the anthropologists Pnina Werbner and Mattia Fumanti in their study "The Aesthetics of Diaspora: Ownership and Appropriation." The authors reject what they perceive as "a singular focus on the outward-oriented aesthetics of diaspora" produced by "postcolonial elites."[36] Instead, they focus on how "cultural transnational aesthetics" unfold as "an experiential embodied process" in "encapsulated diasporas."[37] Werbner and Fumanti introduce a useful distinction between inward-looking and outward-looking aesthetic processes to broaden the perception of what diasporic aesthetics can encompass.[38] They identify a set of vernacular "encapsulated aesthetics" that serves as "the medium for creating a sense of worth and distinction within host nations for otherwise marginalized groups" and which forms a contrast to the hybridized, globalized aesthetics promoted by the main writers of postcolonial analyses, such as cultural studies scholars and theorists of race and racism Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, and postcolonial literary scholar Homi Bhabha.[39] Werbner and Fumanti's own understanding of diaspora aesthetics—diaspora aesthetics as inward-looking and encapsulated—is firmly rooted in a group-based understanding of diaspora that emphasizes the "felt autonomy" of diasporic cultural producers, who they assume to identify almost exclusively with the diasporic community rather than the national community of the country where they or their ancestors have settled.[40] For Werbner and Fumanti, aesthetic cultural performance is oriented by the place of origin and thus becomes a means of "*appropriation* and *ownership* in the alien place of non-ownership, that is, in the diaspora, the site of exile."[41] Incidentally, the idea that isolated diasporic communities maintain

35 Vijay Mishra, "The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora," *Textual Practice* 10, no. 3 (1996): 423.

36 Pnina Werbner and Mattia Fumanti, "The Aesthetics of Diaspora: Ownership and Appropriation," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 78, no. 2 (2013): 171, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2012.669776.

37 Werbner and Fumanti, "The Aesthetics of Diaspora," 149–150, 163.

38 In Werbner and Fumanti's understanding, outward-looking aesthetic processes concern the transnational relations that members of diasporic groups maintain with their home country and which subverts the "pure narratives of nation" in ways that are visible to outsiders. Conversely, inward-looking aesthetic processes are intra-group processes "invisible to outsiders." Werbner and Fumanti, "The Aesthetics of Diaspora," 156.

39 Werbner and Fumanti, "The Aesthetics of Diaspora," 155–156.

40 Werbner and Fumanti, "The Aesthetics of Diaspora," 149.

41 Emphasis in original. Werbner and Fumanti, "The Aesthetics of Diaspora," 151.

their ethnic heritage by imitating cultural forms from distant homelands is exactly that which critical postmigrant discourses critique, no matter whether this idea is voiced by members of a diaspora or by persons associated with the European white majority societies with which the discourses on postmigration are primarily concerned.

It should be noted that, by introducing the concept of the diasporic imaginary, Axel and Mishra distance themselves from a simple place-based understanding of diaspora as oriented towards the "place of origin." Nonetheless, their understanding of diaspora and the diasporic imaginary is still anchored in a group-oriented concept of identity founded on the notion that diasporic subjects and their sense of belonging are determined by ethnic ancestry and attachment to a discrete minority ethnic or national group. It is this ethnic and ancestral connection that shapes their sense of "the real." That is to say, Axel does not use the term diasporic imaginary to describe "the diaspora, its 'people,' or 'community' as illusory," but to articulate that diaspora groups maintain "a precise and powerful kind of identification that is very real."[42] Importantly, Axel also suggests that the diasporic imaginary may open up and transform the role that homeland and ancestry plays in group identification because these points of identification are drawn into a relation with other kinds of images and processes.[43] Mishra adds that "diasporas construct homelands in ways that are very different from people of the homelands themselves."[44]

Axel's and Mishra's observations are relevant to an art history theoretically framed by transculturality and postmigration. Although their definitions of the diasporic imaginary are group-based, Axel and Mishra acknowledge the permeability of the diasporic imaginary. In other words, their concept moves towards transcultural and postmigrant understandings of cultural processes and imaginaries. A similar move is found in the cultural studies scholar Roger Bromley's reflections on the connection between conceptions of diaspora and postmigration. Bromley speaks of the "new aesthetics, new narratives and new belonging" of descendants of immigrants and examines the ways in which these new forms "are articulated with specific representational practices which might be termed 'postmigrant', linked in some ways with the concept of diaspora but also detached from it in so far as the practices emphasize a present and a future trajectory rather than anchorage in an 'originary' culture."[45]

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42 Axel, "The Diasporic Imaginary," 423.

43 Axel, "The Diasporic Imaginary," 426.

44 Mishra, "The Diasporic Imaginary," 424, see also 436.

45 Roger Bromley, "A Bricolage of Identifications: Storying Postmigrant Belonging," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017): 37, https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2017.1347474.

The problem-space of postmigration

Although the term postmigrant is related to notions of the postcolonial and the multicultural, it reacts specifically to European concerns with migration, integration history, national identity, and the conflictual process of coming to terms with the irreversible changes to European demography and cultures wrought by former and ongoing migration. In contrast to diaspora studies, the discourse on postmigration strives to transcend the categorization of diasporas as separate minorities by focusing on the social, cultural, and political entanglements and commonalities between societal groups. Around 2010, the term postmigrant was adopted from the cultural scene by German scholars who used the term to re-open the debates on migration and integration and address the question of who exactly belongs to the nation's "we."[46] The impetus to do so was a growing awareness of the inability of the established concepts of multiculturalism and integration to account adequately for the socio-cultural plurality of contemporary European societies.

Several scholars have thus deployed postmigration to re-conceptualize migration and socio-cultural diversity as a state of normalcy that defines, involves, and has relevance for all members of society. A postmigrant perspective on art examines how artists, curators, and publics work through the struggles that societal pluralization entails; most notably struggles over individual and national identity, issues of recognition and racialization, as well as unequal access to resources, public visibility, and democratic participation.

Post-terms (such as postmodernism and postcolonialism) are usually "passage" terms that signal an epistemic turn or a transition to a new vocabulary. The evolving discourse on postmigration thus signals that there is a movement within studies of migration away from a marginal role—as "separate" minority studies—and towards the center of the social sciences and the humanities Accordingly, I understand postmigration to be what anthropologist David Scott has called a problem-space; that is, a specific historical period with its own "ensemble of questions and answers."[47] A problem-space also brings forth its own discourses and generates a particular horizon of goals to be achieved.

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46 Naika Foroutan, "Neue Deutsche, Postmigranten und Bindungs-Identitäten. Wer gehört zum neuen Deutschland?," *APUZ*, no. 46–47 (2010): 9–15; Foroutan, *Die Einheit der Verschiedenen*; Riem Spielhaus, "Studien in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft: Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung," in *Kongressdokumentation 4. Bundesfachkongress Interkultur, Hamburg 2012*, ed. Marius Koniarczyck, Claudia Niemeyer, Natascha Tomchuk, and Anja Turner (Hamburg: Kulturbehörde der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, 2012), 96–100, https://www.bundesfachkongress-interkultur-2012.de/dokumentation; Erol Yıldız, "Die Öffnung der Orte zur Welt und postmigrantische Lebensentwürfe," *SWS-Rundschau* 3 (2010): 318–339.

47 David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 3–4.

A postmigrant methodology uses key concepts from postcolonial and migration studies, such as race, difference, and hybridity, to examine long-contested issues in new ways. Where the migratory has been reduced to a negative marker of otherness and marginality, postmigrant thought intervenes to question such stigmatizing and marginalizing practices and discourses, as it seeks to place the migratory at the center of the debate about communities, identities, and cultural memories of today's European nations. Postmigrant thought thus prompts scholars to develop fresh approaches to enduring problems.

To pinpoint the difference between the academic discourses on diaspora and postmigration, one could argue that the discourse on diaspora gravitates towards an analytical model based on homeland, ancestral ties, and group identity, whereas the discourse on postmigration gravitates towards an analytical model based on multiplicity, coalitions, and intersectional identities. Thus, the postmigrant perspective provides a heuristic tool for analysis of the ways in which art can challenge monocultural understandings of identity, negotiate locality, and disrupt notions of bounded cultures, both national and diasporic.

Conversely, the transcultural perspective has the potential to bracket the focus that the discourses on postmigration and diaspora tend to place on nation-state or homeland. Postmigrant and diaspora perspectives tend to reinforce this focus by concern with the struggles over "diversity" internal to the nation-state (postmigration), or concern with a minoritized "ethnic enclave in a nation-state … that lives in displacement" (diaspora).[48] The conceptual framework provided by transculturality thus enables us to look beyond the nation-state, to explain how art travels, and to examine translocal connections, networks, and forms of collaboration, solidarity, and alliance. This framework also enables us to analyze hybridized forms of cultural expression without necessarily linking them to national origins and frames, yet still allows for the possibility to do so. In short, to the problem-space of postmigration, the transcultural perspective contributes methods with which to examine the impact of art's mode of circulation on the production of art in local postmigrant contexts and to address issues of form and content hailing or conscious borrowing from other cultures. Inversely, the conflict-sensitivity typical of the postmigrant approach may bolster transculturality against the criticism that it does not sufficiently address the antagonisms, conflicts, and polarizing tensions involved in transculturation, in contradistinction to, for example, postcolonial theory.[49]

With this shift of emphasis, away from the national and the ethnic and

48 Mishra, "The Diasporic Imaginary," 423.

49 Abu-Er-Rub et al., "Introduction," xli.

towards postmigrant and transcultural explanatory frames, the overall question of collective identity is effectively reformulated: how can the identities of local and national communities be re-narrated from the viewpoint of a group whose members have an internally differentiated, or even conflicting, sense of belonging?

Again, I wish to distance myself from the group-oriented perspective of sociological diaspora studies, which is often counterproductive to the study of highly individualized and subjective artistic practices. However, the diasporic imaginary is helpful as what cultural theorist and video artist Mieke Bal calls a "travelling concept." A travelling concept is capable of linking methodologically distinct scientific fields.[50] As a bridging concept, the diasporic imaginary facilitates understanding across the social sciences and the humanities by introducing conceptual links between otherwise separate discourses on related thematics. Finally, scholars can employ the diasporic imaginary as a counter-concept with which to criticize nationalist narratives, ranging from the methodological nationalism that prevails in many academic disciplines (including art history) to the far-right white nationalist narratives that have been rekindled across Europe and the US.[51] Feminist scholar and race and ethnicity theorist Sara Ahmed explains how anti-immigration nationalist narratives construct "the white subject" as a threatened subject, and people of migrant heritage as threats and objects of hate:

> Such narratives work by generating a subject that is endangered by imagined others whose proximity threatens not only to take something away from the subject (jobs, security, wealth), but to take the place of the subject. The presence of this other is imagined as a threat to the object of love [i.e. the homeland or the nation]. This narrative involves a rewriting of history, in which the labour of others (migrants, slaves) is concealed in a fantasy that it is the white subject who "built this land."[52]

Although arguably there are significant differences between methodological nationalism in academia, everyday conservative monoculturalism, diaspora nationalism, and far-right nationalism, it is important to understand that they all involve a politics of closure that constructs and codes the national culture

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50 Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 3–21.

51 Roger Bromley, "The Politics of Displacement: The Far Right Narrative of Europe and Its 'Others'," *From the European South*, no. 3 (2018): 13–26.

52 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 43.

as coherent through taxonomies of racial, ethnic, and cultural difference, which draw the internal and external frontiers of culture and identity. The case study *100% FREMMED?* as will be discussed below, demonstrates how art can work against such politics of closure.

The cultural anthropologist Regina Römhild has made some progress as to how the politics of closure can be avoided in academic discourse and how migration and diaspora studies can provide different methods by which to study the cultural dynamics of a given society. Römhild aims to find ways to avoid both the ongoing "migrantization" of long-established minority ethnic communities and the tenacious fiction of a settled homogeneous community at the core of society. The problem with much migration research, and, one might add, diaspora studies, is that it is often understood as research about migrants or their descendants. Römhild argues that this approach contributes to "migrantization" because it produces a "migrantology" that fixes migratory life-worlds on the periphery of majority society and at the same time contributes to the construction of its supposed counterpart: "The national society of immobile, white non-migrants."[53]

To counteract this polarizing effect, Römhild calls for a methodological change in migration studies and in social and cultural research at large. Instead of making migration itself the object of study, the starting point should be "society's negotiations over migration."[54] In a felicitous turn of phrase, she states that what is needed is "a shift that would 'demigrantise' migration research while 'migrantising' research into culture and society."[55] Furthermore, Römhild suggests that the objective of these new approaches should be "to illuminate the institutions, milieus, and contexts of the (majority) society from the perspective of migration."[56] I concur that such a change is needed, and would add that the concepts of diasporic and postmigrant imaginaries can help us operationalize the postmigrant perspective for the study of art and other image-oriented forms of expression.

As mentioned above, group-oriented notions of diaspora and transculturality are counterproductive to studies of the highly individualized practices of contemporary artists. This problem has been addressed in studies that criticise the so-called "burden of representation."[57] In 1990, the art historian Kobena Mercer used this term to refer to the burden of expectations that racialized

53 Römhild, "Beyond the Bounds of the Ethnic," 70.

54 Römhild, "Beyond the Bounds of the Ethnic," 72.

55 Römhild, "Beyond the Bounds of the Ethnic," 70.

56 Römhild, "Beyond the Bounds of the Ethnic," 70.

57 Kobena Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation," *Third Text* 4, no. 10 (1990): 61–78.

artists were (and in some cases still are) forced to carry, by which they are cast as authentic spokespersons for a culture or ethnic group in its entirety.[58] As Juneja has observed, such expectations produce "a politics of cultural identity" wherein "the terms of inclusion of the 'other'" are founded on notions of "authenticity" and a group-based understanding of "ethnic origins."[59]

Such critiques of the burden of representation lead us to a question about the potential of contemporary art for changing stereotyped, group-oriented perceptions: how can artists draw attention to new narratives of belonging by making them focal points of public spaces?

After refugeedom: storying a new belonging

As the anthropologist Girish Daswani has remarked, refugees are "the classic case for defining diaspora"; regardless of their ethnic, national, and other backgrounds, refugees share "a theme of displacement and exile from a homeland."[60] A focus on the constructed and open-ended nature of identity is helpful as an entry point to understanding refugee identity formation and therefore central to my discussion on the documentary art project *100% FREMMED?*. Just as Steve McQueen's *Year 3* can be perceived as a generational portrait of young British children that reflects the diversity of the British population, the *100% FREMMED?* project—made up of 250 life stories of individuals who had been granted asylum in Denmark since 1956—can be said to form a collective portrait and multivocal narrative that inserts citizens of refugee backgrounds into the narrative of the nation, thereby expanding the idea of what Danishness can be. In the words of the project's creator, Maja Nydal Eriksen, it "contributes a contemporary narrative of nation and people, and places the participants in the official image of Denmark."[61]

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58 Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation," 62–63, 65.

59 Monica Juneja, "Global Art History and the 'Burden of Representation'," in *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*, ed. Hans Belting, Jacob Birken, and Andrea Buddensieg (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 274–275; see also Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation," 61–78; Rasheed Araeen, "Our Bauhaus Others' Mudhouse," *Third Text* 3, no. 6 (1989): 3–16; Cathrine Bublatzky, "The Problem with a Geoaesthetic Approach to the Indian Highway Exhibition," in *Engaging Transculturality*, 317–329.

60 Girish Daswani, "The Anthropology of Transnationalism and Diaspora," in *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, ed. Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani (Chichester: Blackwell, 2013), 40.

61 Quoted from Maja Nydal Eriksen's preface to the exhibition newspaper published on the occasion of the concluding exhibition at Art Center Silkeborg Bad in 2019. *100% FREMMED?* was co-conceptualized by Maja Nydal Eriksen and Trevor Davies. It was produced in collaboration with Metropolis/Copenhagen International Theater. Eriksen created all the photographic portraits and curated the exhibitions, and Mette Katrine Balle Jensen, Sisse Nat-George, and Malene Fenger-Grøndal, along with locally-based writers and journalists, wrote the individual life stories and

Fig 2: *Maja Nydal Eriksen, portrait of Gazi Monir Ahmed, from* 100% FREMMED? *2017, photograph, 110 x 100 cm. © Maja Nydal Eriksen.*

100% FREMMED? was developed over a period of three years and is Denmark's first major documentary collection of individual accounts of former refugees. Additionally, at the time of its completion in 2019, it was distinguished as the most encompassing civic participation project undertaken in Denmark. The project was developed in two phases. The first phase focused on 100 citizens living in the Copenhagen area and culminated in an exhibition at Copenhagen City Hall that included the participatory performative event *Levende fortællinger* (Live stories), during which the audience could engage

conducted the interviews on which these narratives are based. I would like to extend a warm thanks to Maja Nydal Eriksen for generously sharing her knowledge and experience of this project in a long interview on November 26, 2019, which has informed this case study. Any inaccuracies or errors are the sole responsibility of the author. The website of the project: *100% FREMMED?,* accessed February 8, 2020, https://www.100pctfremmed.dk/.

some of the participants in a one-on-one conversation. The project was also documented in an online archive from which the public could follow the development of the project's second phase. The second phase expanded the geographical reach of the project to include cities from other regions in Denmark. The exhibition from the first phase toured regional cities, and with each city ten new portraits of local inhabitants were added to the project. The exhibition was displayed in public spaces and accompanied by other events, such as theater productions with some of the participants as performers, community dinners, events at local libraries, and, importantly, educational activities for school classes. As even this brief outline suggests, *100% FREMMED?* was an extraordinary ramified, expansive, and viral project that engaged inhabitants, cultural institutions, cultural producers, and municipal officers in cities in most parts of the country. In what follows, I will focus on the first exhibition.

The idea for *100% FREMMED?* sprang from the refugee debate that dominated the Danish media in 2015, at a time when one and a half million refugees and migrants entered the European Union. The debates initially centered on the newly arrived and how they might be accommodated (or not). However, as time passed, attention was redirected to those already living in the country, to questions about life after flight, and to the long-term processes of integration. With this change of focus, another question surfaced: how to define the categories Danishness and foreignness? As explained in the foreword of the book from the Copenhagen exhibition:

> With this exhibition, a hundred citizens, all former refugees, respond to this question with one hundred personal and very different stories about being a citizen in Denmark today – foreign or not. Stories of belonging, longing and dreams, memories of people and places, views on society, gender, culture and religion.[62]

In theoretical terms, this collaborative project sought to move beyond the question of *who* is a citizen and *who* is a stranger—who belongs and who does not—towards questions about what processes create a citizen and prevent someone from becoming one at any given moment in history.

All participants were represented by a short first-person narrative and a photographic portrait staged in Copenhagen's Tivoli Garden—an amusement park and national heritage icon located, symbolically, opposite the capital's city hall. Tivoli's colorful, exoticizing environment served as a scenographic background through which to experiment with the interplay between "Danish"

62 Mette Katrine Balle Jensen, Sisse Nat-George, and Maja Nydal Eriksen, *100 procent fremmed?100 personlige fortællinger i tekst og billede af 100 tidligere flytninge* (Copenhagen: Metropolis/Københavns Internationale Teater, 2018), unpaginated.

and foreign. Using the park as a photo studio, Eriksen asked participants to dress up, to select their own background, and to pose with friends, family members, and/or objects of significance to them.

When one reads through the 100 chronologically ordered stories,[63] it is evident that alienation and a sense of not-belonging is felt most acutely among those who have been granted asylum in recent years. For example, Manal Bashir Tahhan arrived from Syria in 2014 and self-identifies as "100% refugee" because, although she has been granted asylum, her future, and that of her children, is still uncertain (Fig. 3). Narratives like Tahhan's appear to fit Werbner and Fumanti's description of an inward-looking aesthetics and experience of diaspora emerging from a sense of living "in exile."[64] This contrasts with the large majority of the stories, however, like that of Gazi Monir Ahmed, who arrived from Bangladesh in 1992 (Fig. 2). On the one hand, as leader of the opposition Bangladesh National Party in Denmark, Ahmed has maintained a strong political engagement in the struggle against the regime in Bangladesh; on the other, he declares himself to be "100% Danish … My life started when I came to Copenhagen Nordvest." Compare this to, for instance, Tri Huu Nguyen, who, having arrived from Vietnam in 1981, describes how the feeling of being part of society can become ambivalent as a result of the re-grounding crisis, something commonly felt by refugees: "I think that most refugees experience a 10-year crisis once they have completed their education, started a family, and got a job. When you have become part of the society, yet you still feel foreign. … I am neither Danish nor Vietnamese. I am just part of society."

Zooming out to the overall character of the stories, most of them concern an ambivalence of belonging, place-making, family, memory, and opinion. But they also reflect the ways in which the tightening of the laws on asylum in recent decades and the polarizing nationalist discourse of "us" against "them" (i.e. asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants) have contributed to limited possibilities for migrants to form and contribute to communities, both local and national.

In a study of diasporic aesthetics, the literary scholar Ato Quayson suggested that the character of "the diasporic imaginary" in literature is determined by the configuration of three core elements: place, nostalgia, and genealogical accounting.[65] As Quayson argues, and *100% FREMMED?* confirms, "place"

63 In the following, all quotes by participants are taken from the English translations in Jensen, Nat-George, and Eriksen, *100 procent fremmed?*, unpaginated.

64 Werbner and Fumanti, "The Aesthetics of Diaspora," 150.

65 Ato Quayson, "Postcolonialism and the Diasporic Imaginary," in *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, 148; see also Michael K. Wilson, "Because the Spirits: Visualizing Connective Consciousness through Diasporic Aesthetic Imaginaries," in *New Frontiers in the Study of the Global*

Fig. 3: *Maja Nydal Eriksen, portrait of Manal Bashir Tahhan, from* 100% FREMMED? *2017, photograph, 100 x 100 cm. © Maja Nydal Eriksen.*

in the receiving country exists in a dialectical relation to an "elsewhere," and diasporic nostalgia springs from an experience of rupture between the past and the present that is "intimately tied to a sense of displacement."[66] It is, so to speak, the affective and temporal dimension of the spatial interrelationship between this place and that place. Lastly, genealogical accounting—meaning "stories of the 'how-we-got-here' variety"—provides "a distinguishing past to the person or community" by accounting for the question of ancestry and thereby linking

African Diaspora: Between Uncharted Themes and Alternative Representations, ed. Rita Kiki Edozie, Glenn A. Chambers, and Tama Hamilton-Wray (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2018), 335.

66 Quayson, "Diasporic Imaginary," 149.

the individual to a community of co-ethnics.[67] The chronological order of the 100 stories in the *100% FREMMED?*'s exhibition book emphatically confirms Quayson's observation that the forms of genealogical accounting change over time, and individual perspectives may dramatically change the sense of what has been left behind.[68]

Significantly, the book also confirms an observation common in migration studies: It is much easier to develop a sense of belonging and identify with a city or a local neighborhood than it is to identify with the imagined community of a nation. Read in the context of its time and place—Denmark reflecting on the 2015 refugee situation in Denmark and Europe, and seeking to come to terms with a postmigrant future already in the making—the project blows open the idea of bounded diaspora groups, as it reflects the myriad lifestyles and experiences of belonging and alienation that former refugees have developed through transcultural processes spanning several years or decades.

100% FREMMED? thus comes across as a *plaidoyer* for what Max Czollek has termed radical diversity. Czollek suggests that radical diversity can be furthered by the politics of disintegration (*Desintegration*), meaning the deconstruction of ethnic group identifications: "The concept of disintegration does not ask how individual groups can be integrated into society in a good or not so good manner, but how society itself can be recognized as the place of radical diversity."[69] Czollek's concept of radical diversity thus departs from the traditional group-based understandings of social diversity, particularly the notions of multiculturalism and diaspora (with its associated forms of diaspora nationalism and ethno-centric identity formation). Czollek's political and aesthetic project of disintegration can perhaps best be understood as an extremely polemic articulation of postmigrant thought, as he perceives his concept of disintegration to be "a Jewish contribution to the postmigrant project, the aim of which is to take radical diversity seriously as the foundation of the German society and to assert it aesthetically."[70] Czollek defines radical diversity as a friction-filled, hyper-complex form of coexistence. Radical diversity is not structured by affiliations to distinct ethnic groups but by individual self-identifications, inter and intra-group differences, and new alliances that cut across ethnic boundaries to produce intersectional forms of

67 Quayson, "Diasporic Imaginary," 151.

68 Quayson, "Diasporic Imaginary," 156.

69 "Das Konzept der Desintegration fragt nicht, wie einzelne Gruppen mehr oder weniger gut in *die Gesellschaft* integriert werden können, sondern wie die Gesellschaft selbst als *Ort der radikalen Vielfalt* anerkannt werden kann." Emphasis in original. Czollek, *Des-integriert Euch!*, 73–74.

70 "Vor diesem Hintergrund verstehe ich die Desintegration als einen jüdischen Beitrag zum postmigrantischen Projekt, dessen Ziel es ist, radikale Diversität als Grundlage der deutsche Gesellschaft ernst zu nehmen und ästhetisch durchzusetzen." Czollek, *Des-integriert Euch!*, 133.

interaction and ways of living together in difference that transgress binary distinctions between natives and migrants, whites and people of color, the so-called majority and (gender, ethnic, migrantized) minorities. From this follows that radical diversity also dismantles notions of a static dichotomy between discriminating and discriminated subjects because it is founded on a dynamic understanding of identity that is attentive to the ways in which identification and self-identification are continually reconstructed by and within changing social contexts, and the understanding that these processes entail that people constantly move between discriminating and non-discriminating subject positions. As this account makes clear, the social imaginary that underpins Czollek's idea of radical diversity is permeated by postmigrant thinking. This point leads to my next question: is it possible to speak of a postmigrant imaginary?

Towards a postmigrant imaginary

A theoretical conception of the postmigrant imaginary has not yet been developed, although it is much needed in studies of art, aesthetics, and culture. However, related ideas have sporadically cropped up in debates about postmigrant culture. A congenial example is found in the anthology *Postmigrantische Visionen: Erfahrungen–Ideen–Reflexionen* (Postmigrant visions: experiences–ideas–reflections). In their introduction, the anthology's editors, migration and education studies scholars Marc Hill and Erol Yıldız, posit that "the idea of the postmigratory is visionary" for its insistence on social change. The link between their work and the idea of a postmigrant imaginary is confirmed by their declaration of the postmigratory as a *Geisteshaltung* (mentality) associated with a particular praxis of *Wissensproduktion* (knowledge production) that makes an epistemological turn by removing the distinction between migrants and non-migrants, migration and settledness.[71] Similarly, in her authoritative conceptualization of postmigrant society, social scientist Naika Foroutan ascribes a normative or visionary dimension to the concept of postmigration and associates postmigrant society with "the promise of a utopia that goes beyond the migratory to negotiate equality without regard to ancestry."[72] Furthermore, in a study of black British literature, literary

71 Marc Hill and Erol Yıldız, "Einleitung," in *Postmigrantische Visionen: Erfahrungen–Ideen–Reflexionen*, ed. Marc Hill and Erol Yıldız (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2018), 7.

72 "Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft … beinhaltet … das Versprechen einer über das Migrantische hinausweisenden Utopie der Gleichheit, die außerhalb der Herkunft verhandelt wird." Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft*, 50. The notion of utopia is sometimes evoked in the discourse on postmigration. For a study of some of the ways in which utopian thinking has been embedded in art produced within the postmigrant condition, see Moritz Schramm, Sten Pultz Moslund, and Sabrina Vitting Seerup, "Postmigration: From Utopian Fantasy to Future Perspectives," in *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts*, 227–248.

scholar Sten Pultz Moslund adopts a postmigrant perspective to explore how "indigenous British voices" replace the theme of "immigrants" and their "descendants" as being caught between competing cultures with "the imagination of new and heterogeneous ways of being British"—a reimagining of Britishness that is, it could be added, in tune with McQueen's generational portrait *Year 3*.[73]

My speculation on what a postmigrant imaginary could be is indebted to art historian Marsha Meskimmon's notion of art as a means of worldmaking, and to Mercer's concept of the dialogic imaginary. The concept I propose differs from Axel's and Mishra's conceptualizations of the diasporic imaginary because my focus is not on the formation of diaspora group identity but on how art in public spaces can articulate a postmigrant imaginary. Basically, I suggest that artworks can inform the development of theory: by examining art projects such as *Year 3*, *100% FREMMED?*, and *Superkilen*, we may achieve a more accurate understanding of the postmigrant imaginary and how this concept resonates with the diasporic imaginary.

It should be stressed that I do not propose a concept of postmigrant "imagination" in this article but an "imaginary." Imagination is usually understood to be a fundamental capacity to form internal images or ideas of objects and situations, and I do not think postmigrant characteristics can be identified at this basic level. Finding support in the way anthropologist Arjun Appadurai based his idea of "diasporic public spheres" on an understanding of "imagination" as a dynamic creative ability to produce mental images, I submit that the process of imagination is not postmigrant in itself,[74] imagination can, however, work towards postmigrant ends and engender a postmigrant "imaginary." Imaginary here refers to something that is imagined but is not pure fantasy. Rather, an imaginary has a projective quality, and it is formative of the social world. It can fuel action and materialize signifiers such as images and other forms of representation.[75] Like Mishra and Axel, I stress that imaginaries shape people's sense of the real, and, in agreement with Mercer's concept of the dialogic imagination, I understand the postmigrant imaginary to be the product of "a dialogics of give-and-take" and processes of creative exchange.[76] Finally, the descriptor "postmigrant" indicates that

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73 Sten Pultz Moslund, "Towards a Postmigrant Reading of Literature: An Analysis of Zadie Smith's *NW*," in *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts*, 94.

74 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 3–10, 21–22.

75 *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. "Imagination," s.v. "Imaginary."

76 Kobena Mercer, *Travel & See: Black Diaspora Art Practices Since the 1980s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 29.

a postmigrant imaginary articulates aspects of postmigrant existence and engages a postmigrant problem-space, along with its "ensemble of questions and answers" and its anticipation of future goals to achieve.[77]

Mercer's theory of a "dialogic" imagination can add further nuance to the conception of the postmigrant imaginary. Although he seldom uses the terms imagination or imaginary and does not theorize a *postmigrant* or a *diasporic* imagination, if one traces the discursive chains of equivalence in his methodological reflections, it becomes clear that his dialogic imagination is inextricably linked to notions of diaspora and transnationalism.[78] Mercer developed the idea of a dialogic tendency in black diasporic art and film in a chapter entitled "Diasporic Culture and the Dialogic Imagination" in his first book, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*.[79] In 2016, he broadened his dialogic approach in the introduction to his collection of essays, *Travel & See: Black Diaspora Art Practices since the 1980s*.[80] By then, his dialogic approach had evolved into an "interpretive model" that he claimed can encompass "every period" in colonial and postcolonial modernity.[81] Based on these two texts, I understand Mercer's "dialogics of diaspora" and dialogic imagination to refer to the processual aspects of diasporic imaginaries. In other words, the "dialogic imagination" offers another way to speak about diasporic imaginaries as creative, cross-cultural processes of mutual exchange instead of understanding diasporic imaginaries as determined by ties to homeland, ancestry, and a delimited diaspora community, as do Axel and Mishra.

Mercer developed a "critical dialogism," informed by philosopher and literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of discursive struggle and his idea of a "dialogic principle" in which "the possibility of social change is prefigured in the collective consciousness by the multiplication of critical dialogues."[82] In Mercer's understanding, the dialogic imagination positions itself at a distance from the fictions of homogeneity within both national and diasporic communities, while still maintaining active relations to the imagined communities of both, and remaining critically attentive to the asymmetrical identity positions of those involved in the interaction between the two types

77 Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 3–4.

78 Mercer, *Travel & See*; Kobena Mercer, "Art History and the Dialogics of Diaspora," *Small Axe* 16, no. 2 (2012): 213–227; Kobena Mercer, "Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination: The Aesthetics of Black Independent Film in Britain," in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 247–260.

79 Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 53–66.

80 Mercer, *Travel & See*, 9.

81 Mercer, *Travel & See*, 29.

82 Mercer, "Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination," 254, see also 255–257.

of community. Taking 1980s British film as his example, Mercer demonstrates how black filmmakers developed a dialogic approach "responsive to the diverse and complex qualities of our black Britishness and British blackness – our differentiated specificity as a diasporic people."[83] Shifting focus to a more general level, he concludes:

> Critical dialogism has the potential to overturn the binaristic relations of hegemonic boundary maintenance by multiplying critical dialogues *within* particular communities and *between* the various constituencies that make up the "imagined community" of the nation. … Moreover, critical dialogism questions the monologic exclusivity on which the dominant version of national identity and collective belonging are based.[84]

The crux of Mercer's dialogic approach is that the "cross-cultural encounter" is considered to be a process of mutual involvement and critical dialogue structured by power relations, rather than a colonizing assimilation of one culture into another: a "back-and-forth process set into motion by dynamics of travel and migration, whereby signifying material comes to be shared among asymmetrically positioned identities."[85]

Mercer's concept can aid an understanding of the postmigrant imaginary as different from the diasporic imaginary, in that the postmigrant imaginary is without an authentic "place of origin" to which it refers. The postmigrant imaginary, as I define it, is the product of people living together in difference within a country in which a significant number of immigrants or their ancestors have settled; the postmigrant imaginary did not exist prior to the transformative contact and reciprocal processes unfolding in the receiving country. Measured against the characteristics that Quayson ascribes to the diasporic imaginary, the place that matters most in the postmigrant imaginary is "here," not "there." Moreover, the genealogical accounting involved within a postmigrant imaginary concerns the historical struggles and genealogies that have produced the postmigrant society, not the places from which its inhabitants hail. Thus, in contrast to the diasporic imaginary, co-ethnic identification is not constitutive of the postmigrant imaginary because it is not structured by affiliations to discrete ethnic communities but by new transversal alliances.

Furthermore, the postmigrant imaginary does not set itself against the national; on the contrary, it actively seeks to renegotiate, redefine, and pluralize national affiliations. It does, however, set itself against the nationalist

83 Mercer, "Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination," 254.

84 Mercer, "Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination," 257.

85 Mercer, *Travel & See*, 15, 29.

monologic version of collective belonging. As opposed to the imaginaries of many transnational communities (for example, LGBTQ+ communities worldwide that center on gender identity and social justice, or Buddhist communities outside of Asia that revolve around a religious imaginary),[86] a postmigrant imaginary is contingent upon a negotiation with the particularities of its nation-state framework and committed to rethinking and expanding the dominant notions of national identity and national belonging. Although the transcultural scope of the postmigrant imaginary transcends the bounds of the nation-state (as local communities interact with other communities further afield), any form of postmigrant imaginary must be considered within the specific constraints and possibilities of the nation-state. Put differently, the postmigrant imaginary is always anchored in physical places and social dynamics of "here," and always refracted through the local and national discourses and politics of place with which it actively and critically engages, as my examples above have demonstrated.

With this concept established, we may ask: What stake does art have in the postmigrant imaginary? As Meskimmon has argued, art has a potential for world making, that is, for imagining anew the world as we know it. Furthermore, Meskimmon suggests that art's "materializing force" can be used to express imaginaries and to engender "inclusive, yet critical, public spaces in which transversal dialogues can take place."[87] Artists who are responsive to postmigrant conditions play a crucial role in the creation of imaginaries that in turn give form to a sense of multiple belonging and a notion of collective identity as being a composite. When such artists create works for public spaces, they have the potential to transform the space. Their works can add qualities to the site, create new meaning, develop new visual and spatial organizations, and perhaps also introduce different social functions as the people who use these spaces may develop other ways of using them. The work may also stir up debates about suppressed and sensitive issues such as colonial history and exploitation, racism, inequality, and who has the right to claim, use, define, or dominate public space.

Bearing in mind the worldmaking potential of art, I turn to my concluding example to examine how art in public space is on the one hand shaped by the disagreements and frictions emerging with the postmigrant condition and, on the other, capable of giving shape to a new postmigrant imaginary. Moving dialectically between a critical engagement with the realities of contemporary

86 Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani, "Introduction – Diaspora and Transnationalism: Scapes, Scales and Scopes," in *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, 4.

87 Marsha Meskimmon, "From the Cosmos to the Polis: On Denizens, Art and Postmigration Worldmaking," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017): 34, https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2017.1343082.

society and the imaginative project of articulating a new sense of belonging, I suggest that art in public space may open the national imaginary to diasporic and postmigrant ways of thinking about self-fashioning and collective identity.

The *Superkilen* park project exemplifies how an urban renewal project can mediate between social groups in a heterogeneous area, as the people living in the immediate vicinity of this park relate to more than fifty different nationalities. Involvement of local citizens has long been a staple of urban renewal projects in Denmark. This project assumed a form of controlled participation that enabled the artists and architects to remain the ultimate curators of the project.[88] Led by the artist group Superflex, the project group in charge of *Superkilen* decided to involve users of the area as directly as possible in selecting urban objects for their total redesign of the park.[89] Instead of using

Fig. 4: *Superflex with BIG and Topotek 1,* Octopus from Tokyo*, 2012, located in* Det sorte marked *(Black Market), one of the three areas that make up* Superkilen*, Nørrebro, Copenhagen. Photograph: Iwan Baan.*

88 Line Marie Bruun Jespersen, "Velkommen udenfor! Kunst som mødesteder i byens rum," *Periskop*, no. 17 (2017): 122. This analysis builds on a previous article on "postmigrant public spaces" in which *Superkilen* is compared to the first monument in Denmark to critically commemorate Danish colonialism, Jeannette Ehlers and La Vaughn Belle's *I Am Queen Mary* (2018). Anne Ring Petersen, "The Square, the Monument and the Reconfigurative Power of Art in Postmigrant Public Spaces," in *Postmigration: Art, Culture and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Anna Meera Gaonkar, Astrid Sophie Ost Hansen, Hans Christian Post, and Moritz Schramm (Bielefeld: transcript, forthcoming 2021).

89 For more information and essays on Superflex and their numerous international projects and collaborations, see Superflex, accessed November 1, 2020, https://superflex.net/.

the standard equipment for parks and other public spaces in Copenhagen, locals were asked to nominate specific city objects such as benches, bins, trees, playgrounds, manhole covers, and signage from other countries. In total, more than 100 objects were selected from more than fifty countries.[90]

Over time, locals may develop affective attachments to some of these objects that might operate on several levels. They may identify with "their" object because they have chosen it, and the objects can potentially trigger memories of a family's place of origin, or countries visited on holiday. Hence, they can serve as everyday sites of memory where people may recall places to which they feel attached. Some people may simply feel attracted to certain objects in their area because they are visually fascinating landmarks, like the giant Japanese Octopus used by children as a climbing frame (Fig. 4) or because they have become a social meeting point, like the Moroccan fountain where young people gather.[91]

The area named *Den røde plads* (Red Square) is designed for various kinds of physical and social activity, such as boxing, basketball, resting on the swings, or passing through the area on foot, bike, or skateboard (Fig. 5). The park includes a multifarious selection of urban objects, the constellations of

Fig 5: *Superflex with BIG and Topotek 1,* Den røde plads *(Red Square), 2012, one of the three areas that make up* Superkilen*, Nørrebro, Copenhagen. Photograph: Torben Eskerod.*

90 Superflex, *Superkilen: Superkilen's 108 Objects and their History*, 23, accessed February 25, 2020, https://superflex.net/files/superkilen_objects_EN.pdf.

91 Barbara Steiner, "Beyond Being Nice," in *Superkilen: A Project by BIG, Topotek 1, Superflex*, ed. Barbara Steiner (Stockholm: Arvinius + Orfeus, 2013), 16.

which reflect the demographic complexity of the neighborhood. Superflex's deliberate efforts to avoid aesthetic uniformity in the square creates an emphatically anti-assimilationist aesthetics that questions the political ideal of social cohesion based on sameness.[92]

Only a superficial critique would see in *Superkilen* a naïve celebration of harmonious multiculturalism. Closer scrutiny reveals fissures and contradictions that indicate that *Superkilen* is an exploration of new ways of using public art to represent the complex history and identity of an urban area. The project seeks to make Nørrebro's history visible, not only as a culturally heterogeneous area but as an area troubled by various forms of discord. Nørrebro has a history of fights over space, such as the struggle over the *Byggeren* children's playground in 1980,[93] and the battle over the *Ungdomshuset* youth center at Jagtvej 69.[94] The young squatters and users of the house who founded the youth center were evicted in 2007 when the evangelical free church of *Faderhuset* purchased the municipal building. This resulted in riots and fierce protests from left-wing groups. In recent years, the area has been troubled repeatedly by gang warfare. The Superkilen project group thus had to grapple with the challenge of creating an urban park with an embedded art project that could "give voice to" a composite urban community (on a symbolic level the embodiment of a diverse national community) which is occasionally riven by violent conflicts and divided by internal fissures, yet destined to share a common space.

By selecting "foreign" urban objects, and by involving local inhabitants in the selection processes, Superflex created a space that allows for various positions, values, and identifications, without postulating social cohesion or uniformity. In this way, *Superkilen* lends visual and spatial expression to the inherently heterogeneous community. *Superkilen* evokes Nørrebro's multiple layers of meaning, its diversity, and the mixture of frictions and conviviality of a "we" with a sense of multiple belongings. At the same time, the project blends the spectacle of cultural difference and multiplicity into the ordinariness of local everyday life. *Superkilen* thus suggests that the Nørrebro community has found ways to live not only with but through difference.

At this juncture, I would like to harness Edward Said's contrapuntal analysis to explain how this urban park project can generate different, even contradictory, effects. Said's analysis superimposes the claims of an internal

92 Jespersen, "Velkommen udenfor!," 122.

93 Anders Lund Hansen and René Karpantschof, "Last Stand or Renewed Urban Activism? The Copenhagen Youth House Uprising, 2007," in *Urban Uprisings: Challenging Neoliberal Urbanism in Europe,* ed. Margit Mayer, Catharina Thörn, and Håkan Thörn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 183.

94 Hansen and Karpantschof, "Last Stand or Renewed Urban Activism," 175–201.

reading of a work that is attentive to the artist's intentions and strategies of representation as well as "the work's imaginative project" on the one hand the claims of various forms of external critique on the other.[95] When interpreting a work contrapuntally, one moves back and forth between internal and external perspectives, striving to "articulate the work's vision" and give full credit to the work's sophistication at the same time as one examines the ways it guides the responses of the audience in a particular direction. The external perspective also situates the work within "a wider field of imaginative possibilities" to problematize the work's inconsistencies and ideological foundation.[96] This dual approach makes it possible to "think through and interpret together" aspects of *Superkilen* that are "discrepant, each with its own particular agenda … and all of them coexisting and interacting with others."[97]

The aesthetics and symbolism of *Superkilen* highlight the intrinsic socio-cultural differences and conflicts within the area, but they also gesture towards the real and imaginary potential of living together in difference. However, *Superkilen*'s urban objects are arguably ambivalent or polysemous (as visual objects always are), so some observers might be liable to read the "foreign" objects as symbolic identity markers of the inhabitants' migrant backgrounds and criticize *Superkilen* for "migrantizing" (Römhild) or even exoticizing Nørrebro. Such criticism would fail to grasp the subversive nature of this transcultural assemblage of objects and the way it ruptures the time-honored image of a homogeneous Danish citizenry, and claims visibility in public space for under- and non-represented groups. To take this point about *Superkilen*'s inherently contradictory nature further: While the assemblage of objects may activate the migrantizing gaze of the white majority citizens, thus transforming the inhabitants (of all backgrounds and colors) into the objects of a (utopian or dystopian) fantasy of Danish multiculturalism, weaving urban objects from afar into the fabric of the Danish capital is also a public acknowledgement of the embedded and settled presence of immigrants and their descendants. Thanks to its monumental presence in public space, which is always symbolically invested, *Superkilen* is a recognition of migrantized inhabitants as political subjects.

To conclude, *Superkilen*'s urban space, both open and delimited, gestures towards the idea of the *polis*—the ancient Greek word signifying both city and state, or city-state. *Superkilen* can therefore be read not only as an emblem of Nørrebro's postmigrant urban community but also as a symbolic, anticipatory model of a postmigrant democratic state. As the descriptor

95 George M. Wilson, "Edward Said on Contrapuntal Reading," *Philosophy and Literature* 18, no. 2 (1994): 265.

96 Wilson, "Edward Said on Contrapuntal Reading," 266.

97 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 32.

postmigrant indicates, this model departs from the utopian vision of a society in which all differences and conflicts have been eradicated. *Superkilen*'s visual polyphony—which critics accustomed to minimalist Scandinavian design would surely perceive as cacophony—is a visually striking reminder of the antagonistic foundations of plural democratic societies.[98] In a similarly anticipatory spirit, *100% FREMMED?* was exhibited in public urban spaces in order to attract the curiosity and empathic engagement of people from all walks of life, and to inspire a change of perception of "the Other" and a more welcoming mentality. The exhibitions invited the public to recognize individuals with refugee backgrounds as co-citizens who have worked hard to become a part of Danish society. As a countrywide, yet locally embedded, project *100% FREMMED?* utilized postmigrant imaginaries to instigate a more appreciative discourse on refugees and migrants, as well as to gesture towards a more hospitable society.

Paraphrasing Meskimmon, I submit that these two participatory art projects have generated public spaces in which, in effect, people both share experiences and do not do so, as in some respects they are not able to because their social backgrounds and diasporic affiliations differ significantly.[99] Thus, what *Superkilen* and *100% FREMMED?* have accomplished is not to create unity but to negotiate similarities, differences, and frictions within a postmigrant frame for understanding our interdependence as fellow citizens.

98 Chantal Mouffe, "Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?," in *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility & Democracy*, ed. Trevor Joyce (Berlin: Revolver Publishing, 2005), 154–156.

99 Meskimmon, *Transnational Feminisms, Transversal Politics and Art*, 154.