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Mobility *extra situ* —
the cosmopolitical aesthetics of Tania Ruiz Gutierrez’
Elsewhere/Annorstädes/Ailleurs

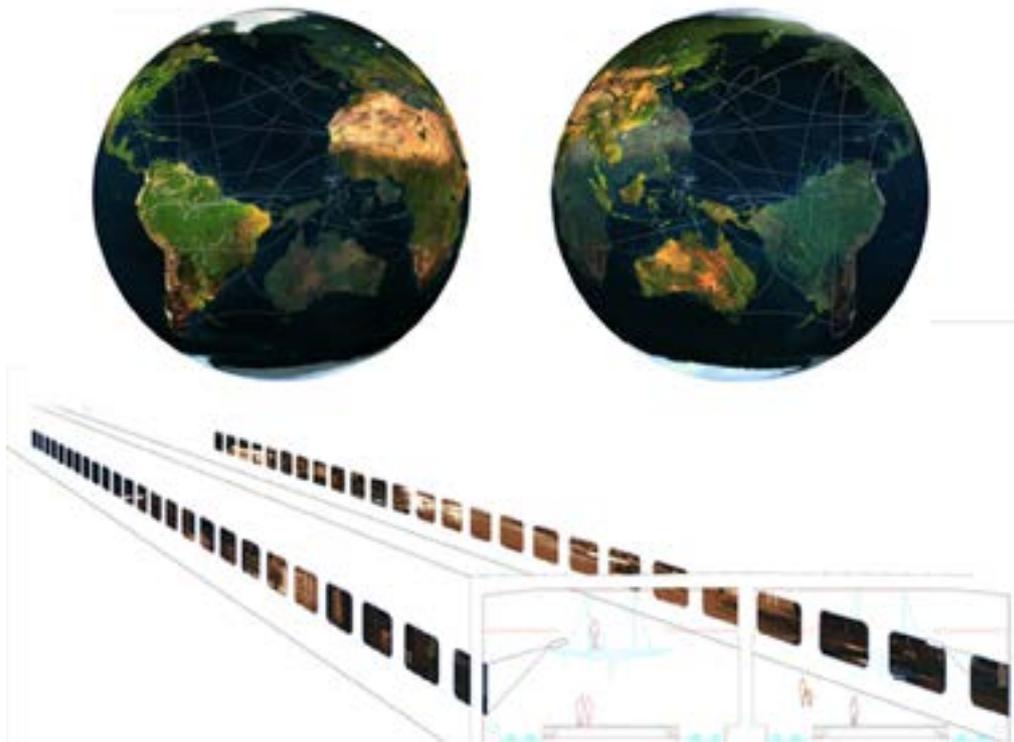
Abstract

In discussing a major public video installation, *Elsewhere/Annorstädes/Ailleurs* by Tania Ruiz Gutierrez, the present article seeks to address what is referred to here as ‘mobility *ex situ*’—the unsettling aspects of a mobility culture that is both ubiquitous and at the same time exorbitant, never simply ‘in place’. Commissioned for one of the stations along the Øresund Link between Denmark and Sweden, this world-embracing cinematic montage is an integrated part of an expansive connectivity infrastructure. Yet, while providing site-specific motion captures of a translocational world, the work not only actualises a radically transformed sense of presence. Randomised and disjointed, the flow of imagery also draws attention to the territorial incoherencies and asymmetries of a mobility culture, which, despite increased site sensitivity, does not manage to shake off its constitutive ‘elsewheres’. The artwork thus provides an opportunity to unfold the ‘mobility script’ from an aesthetic—but also political—point of view, and this in three consecutive steps: the first, an introductory presentation of the art work as situational stammering; the second, a critical reflection through the work on nomadic or dispersed geographies; and the third, a discussion of the work as an expression of a cosmopolitical aesthetics.

Keywords: mobility, locality, mediation, site-specificity, psychogeography, nomadism, ecology, cosmopolitics, aesthetics.

1. Approaching Elsewhere

Reaching the lower platforms of Malmö Central Station, one is instantly, and quite literally, carried away. Descending via one of the four elongated escalators, one is not only confronted with announcements of train arrivals and delays, but alluringly sucked into a flow of imagery. One after the other, on both sides of the elongated subterranean space, landscape sequences pass by — river shores, suburban settlements, roadscares, garden cities, tropical forests, industrial zones. Successively, details detach themselves: a green cupola, a striped parasol and next, a construction site, its soil glowing in reddish hues.



Despite its subterranean location and lack of exterior, the new station space conveys certain monumentality. The architecture, by Swedish SWECO Architects, is characterised by functionality and simplicity, with light conditions and materiality as key elements (Näslund 2009). Visible surfaces are made of plain concrete, natural stone, glass, and steel, all bestowing the space with a certain raw yet unequivocal architectonic grandeur.

This is a spatial dignity further reinforced by the artistic work running along the rough concrete walls. Extending over more than 300 metres, Tania Ruiz Gutierrez' *Elsewhere/Annorstädes/Ailleurs* dominates the space. It is a major, multi-projection video installation consisting of 46 rectangular video projections — 23 on each side of the two central platforms — each measuring almost three by five metres. Smoothly rounded at the corners and carefully synchronised, they look like large train windows. Outside, landscape sequences pass by, transforming the enclosed space from a terminal to a vehicle for swift transport to a thousand and one corners of the world.

As a site-specific installation, *Elsewhere/Annorstädes/Ailleurs* is well integrated with the station space. Ruiz Gutierrez, a French/Colombian/Chilean video artist living and working in Paris, was selected for the assignment by the Swedish National Public Arts Council back in 2005, more than five years before the scheduled opening. This enabled her to closely follow the construction process from the start and integrate the work both architectonically and thematically with the infrastructural framework.

The work is one of four major art installations in the three new stations along the City Tunnel, which complements the important Øresund Bridge [1], the transnational link connecting Malmö with Copenhagen, Sweden with Denmark, and south-eastern Scandinavia with the Continent (Faxén 2010; Swedish Transport Administration, <http://www.cisionwire.com/citytunneln/r/the-art-in-malmo-s-citytunneln,c531211>). As the most conspicuous and costly of the works, it also serves as the flagship of the Øresund Link. Rather than a dutiful and decorative addition to a damp and shady underground passage for commuters disembarking from and boarding containers, it is an expression of intensified geographical awareness and a new attentiveness to the vital importance of mobility and interconnectedness.



Frequented by around 50,000 travellers a day, the lower part of Malmö Central Station constitutes one of the busiest nodes in an economically vibrant region. Nonetheless, the new waiting hall is devoid of advertising or commercial messages, allowing the multi-projection to dominate the space. It transforms the waiting crowd into a actors embroiled in a drama of dislocation. As for the final destination, one can only guess: 'From the salt flats of Uyuni to the roads of Saigon, from the plains of Siberia to those of Patagonia, from the Honshu-Shikoku Bridge to the Orinoco River to central Montreal to the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro to Johannesburg's Soweto to a Kensington street to Oaxaca market to Plaza Mayor to the Sicilian coast to Jaipur to Alexandria'. The catalogue accompanying the work gives only indications. One message, however, seems clear. Not only is the world seeping into Malmö but, from now on, this minor city on the European periphery 'will travel the world' (www.elsewhere.name).

Elsewhere/Annorstäder/Ailleurs is, however, neither a deft promotion video nor a coherent cinematic oeuvre. Sustaining the travelling footage is a technologically sophisticated spatial screening system fitted into an infrastructural hub. Because of its technical complexity and costly maintenance, the moving multi-projection is conceived as semi-permanent, scheduled to remain for a minimum of five years. The core of the work is a database containing a total of 90 hours of landscape sequences, collected during four years' world travel. Thoroughly edited, the 1,300 or so sequences, all three to four minutes long, are projected through the synchronised and specially adapted, hidden beamers that, through a customised arrangement, have been set to operate in an environment full of microscopic metal dust, its concentration increasing every time the train brakes are applied. The continuous projection is, moreover, randomised to minimise the viewers' chance of seeing the same sequence twice. Even for commuters (the most frequent visitors to this space), the risk of experiencing the same scenery time and again should be minimal.

Despite, or perhaps owing to, its eye-catching and technologically sophisticated presence, the work raises questions. What kind of mobility is projected? Which are the locations floating by? Why did they end up here? And how does the whole machinery really work?



The work has mostly had a positive, not to say effusive reception, internationally as well (Sterling 2010; European Prize for Urban Public Space 2012, <http://www.publicspace.org/en/prize>). One of the main Swedish newspapers described the work as representative of ‘an art that is tailored to its place, and still opens the mind to a thousand other places’ (Söderholm 2011). A Spanish critic appreciates the non-commercial claim of the work and its ambition to ‘combat the advertising assault’ (Bravo Bordas 2012) that plagues the public spaces of so many European cities. One critic is more hesitant about what he sees as a general tendency among artists to uncritically submit to ‘an aesthetic of maximal flow and minimal friction’. What is imaginative from one perspective might, from another, seem replaceable — ‘nothing but an escapist wallpaper in the era of globalisation’ (Jönsson 2010). Most commentators, however, have appreciated the work for its actualisation of the historical and phenomenological parallel between train travel and cinematic representation, and celebrate its poetic straightforwardness whereby ‘a train carriage can come to resemble a kind of cinema theatre, in which the view through the window becomes the film’ (<http://www.cisionwire.com/citytunneln/r/the-art-in-malmo-s-citytunneln,c531211>).

Whether straightforward or escapist, the work reflects a society, which more than ever is on the move. The world goes around, and so do people and their possessions, matter and merchandise, images and ideas. Information flows perforate the stationary, transforming the most solid walls to permeable interfaces, turning the most remote presence into what architectural theorist Malcolm McCullough recently has described as ‘ambient commons’ (McCullough 2013)—public as well as private spaces saturated by signals of movement and activity in other locations and in more than one sense. In the station space, movement would be ‘ambient’ also without the contribution of Ruiz Gutierrez. Yet through the work, omnipresent mobility is amplified and enhanced also beyond the ordained, thus exposing the deep reaching restlessness of contemporary spatiality.



Already the very title of *Elsewhere/Annorstädes/Ailleurs* gives a sense of a spatial unrest that is at the same time ontological and geopolitical. It draws attention to the fact that presumably firm relationships—like the one between here and there—have undergone destabilisation, undermining that which used to provide the basis for experience and knowledge. A scholarly answer to this unsettlement is the so called ‘mobility turn’ in the social sciences (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006); a turn not only towards a new subject matter, but a more fundamental reconsideration of the modern world as an mobile mesh of energy currents, communication networks and transportation systems, the knowledge practices of which have to involve the trailing and tracking of social relations and contexts ‘on the move’ (Canzler, Kauffmann and Kesselring 2008). In this respect, the ‘mobilities paradigm’ presents a time-sensitive, criss-crossing and agile critique both of earthbound localisms and of materially detached sociological structuralisms. Yet, while introducing the aspect of change into the socio-spatial equation, the receptive ‘tracing’ of mobilities (Canzler, Kauffmann and Kesselring 2008) might also obscure the spatial and temporal side effects of a material and many times highly inflexible mobility infrastructure.

As an intervention into the very transport infrastructure, *Elsewhere* does not confine itself to the tracing of diverse mobilities. Instead, the installation is an active part in what urban sociologist Ole B. Jensen has described as the ‘staging of mobilities’ (Jensen 2013), as such also literally touching upon the ‘mobility dilemma’ at the centre of contemporary mobilities discourse (Urry 2007; Kesselring 2008, 84; Rammler 2008, 58; Freudenthal-Pedersen 2009; Thackara 2011, 128; Sheller 2011). While modern societies are inconceivable without intense exchange and far-reaching mobility, they are also conditioned by new and increasingly immutable ‘spatio-temporal fixes’ (Harvey 2003, 115); highly material transportation apparatuses, permitting both exceptional accumulation of power and stigmatizing forms of exclusion and isolation. From a mobilities discourse point of view, the preferred way to handle this dilemma is to take into consideration not only the programming of mobility ‘from above’ but also the equally decisive, embodied ‘staging’ or ‘making’ of mobility taking place ‘from below’ (Jensen 2013, 5-6). Focusing on the microphysical conditioning of mobility ‘*in situ*’ (Jensen 2013, 7), it would be possible to, if not resolve the mobility dilemma, so develop a

more thorough ‘critical mobilities thinking’ (Jensen 2009; 2013, 7), potentially proposing also a constructive frame for integrating action.

An unresolved aspect of the mobility dilemma is, however, precisely the aspect of criticality or critical positioning. From where in the mobility framework does criticism emerge? How and when do critical perspectives open up? These are also the implicit questions of *Elsewhere*. Providing site-specific motion captures of a trans-locational world, the work not only actualises a radically transformed relation between mobility and locality, but also brings into sight the precarious act of staging or framing this relation, and the inevitable differentiations and asymmetries that this practice—as an aesthetic practice—implies. Against this background, the overall argument of the present paper is that a critical struggling with the paradoxes of mobility and locality requires not only a mobile both-and approach, but also a more fundamental, aesthetic reconsideration of a constitutive ‘beyond’. While the artistic intervention of *Elsewhere* certainly brings into attention a mobility *in situ*, it also expands the geography of mobility, activating extra-situational ‘elsewheres’.

In the following, I will therefore try to show how the video installation in question expands the mobility dilemma into an onto-aesthetic concern with geo-political implications. In this respect, the artwork also relates to and comments on earlier attempts to stage aesthetically conscious, site sensitive interventions into mobility and locality regimes. As a consequence, the article is divided into three parts: first, a reconsideration through *Elsewhere* of the notion of site-specificity; second, a reflection on the work from the perspective of nomadic or dispersed geographies; and third, a further interpretation of the work as a disconcerting cosmo-aesthetic expansion.

2. *Situated stammering*

The main component of *Elsewhere* is a location database of digitally manipulated moving images, projected in such a way as to create an illusion of mobility and unsettled spatiality. At first glance, the digital modelling of the footage seems unobtrusive, a gentle channelling of a ‘lost river’ (www.elsewhere.name) of ‘natural’ landscapes. One does not need to linger for very long, however, before noticing that this moderation is a chimera. The work is far from a direct mediation of distributed localities. On the contrary, what may seem to be a primary flow of raw geographical data captured with a simple, handheld camcorder is, in fact, the result of an immense post-production effort sustained by an advanced technological set-up. Shot from various vehicles at different paces, the footage required extensive stabilisation and perspectival manipulation, a manual task executed by four people over two years. This homogenisation, Tania Ruiz Gutierrez recounts in an interview on 3 February 2013, included manual replication of the imagery in order to create the synchronised flow, as well as manipulation of speeds to level out perspectival differences and create continuity between the different sequences. A final but not unimportant manipulation was to erase advertising from each and every clip — cleansing the footage from commercial litter, but also removing the traces of a contemporary, exhibitionist place-branding logic and responding to the no-logo policy adopted by the administrative body in charge of the station space.

Yet, waiting on the platform, one notices the work’s force of attraction. People seem quite willing to ‘lose themselves’ and suspend their disbelief; eyes follow movements, arms are stretched out to indicate observations and individuals walk along, adapting to the pace of the drifting scenes. Some have reported slight dizziness or nausea: a reaction potentially caused by the enforced steadiness of the flow.

This unsettling stability actualises the self-referential dimension of the set-up and the intensified relationship between technology, mobility and locality. As emphasised by French film theorist Raymond Bellour, both railway and cinematography are technological attractions

and public spectacles. They are immersive spaces, but also material and situated devices for factual and fictive dislocation. A point of reference is of course the historical panoramas of world expositions, which offered broad audiences simulated, yet captivating experiences of locations near and far, thus creating an edifying as well as entertaining awareness of locality and mobility (Bellour 2010, Huhtama 2013).

In previous works, Ruiz Gutierrez similarly explored the changing interface between mobility, technology and locality. Inspired by Moholy-Nagy's experimental 'polycinema' (Moholy-Nagy, quoted in Ruiz Gutierrez 2004), or what Gene Youngblood designated as 'expanded cinema' (Youngblood 1970), Ruiz Gutierrez has developed her own digitally sustained cinematic re-encodings. Her first experimental video work, *Ruiro Siki* (1998), was based on video streams from what was then the early Internet. Redirected and reassembled into a local circuit, they would appear in new, multi-linear constellations, commenting on the title of the work, a Quechua expression literally signifying 'round rear end' or, in other words, 'a person who cannot stay in place' (Ruiz Gutierrez 2004, 26). Since then, Ruiz Gutierrez has continued to redirect cinematic practice towards what she herself describes as spatio-temporal *tissage* — 'weaving-together' moving imagery, intensifying the cinematic montage. The result is what Ruiz Gutierrez refers to as *cinéma infini*: endless cinematic textures with running, repetitive wefts, but also textures that, through their inner dynamic, detach themselves from their documented source, forming 'spatio-temporal objects' (Ruiz Gutierrez 2004, 151) with agency of their own. More recent examples are the series of cinematic adaptations called *Plazas*, where Ruiz Gutierrez restages the movement of people in public space to eliminate, but also enhance, the space outside the frame (www.taniaruiiz.info). Also the recent *Garde-temps* ('Timepiece') installation — an outdoor, interactive a three-metre-high, smoothly curved, urn-shaped screen sculpture commissioned by the City of Vancouver — exemplifies a similar playing out of flow and selectivity. Still on its turntable, the sensitised vessel accumulates traces of everyday life gathered on site through a closed-circuit thermal camera registering heat from passers-by, transforming the data into animated sequences that, like a glossy ceramic glaze, dissolve the sculpture's surface (<http://www.gardetemps.info/>).

In a similar way, the data streams of *Elsewhere* disclose a movement from the enticing and informative towards the troubling and disquieting. One of the most conspicuous traits of the work is in this sense the programmed delay in between the projections, the repetitive 'stretching' of the footage as to fill the station space. Moving along the walls are also the sharp, vertical cuts between sequences, often reinforced by colour contrasts. As one landscape ceases, the next inexorably appears, like an incision in the flow. Furthermore, there is also the discontinuity in perspective depth; a disjointedness between a foreground moving at one speed and a background sliding past more slowly. This results in a dead-angle delay in between windows — an irrational disappearance and reappearance, which gives the impression of hidden folds beyond visual control. These cuts and pleats interrupt the steady flow, and as a visual hesitation, they call attention to the persistent and accentuated foreignness embedded in the production.



In an analysis of Ruiz Gutierrez' work, Raymond Bellour describes this interlaced quality as a 'productive tension' between a low-budget, documentary approach to lived reality and a high-tech digital processing (Bellour 2010, 17). This tension runs through the work of Ruiz Gutierrez and could also be described as an attentiveness as to the sophisticated layering of space and time. The cinematographic *tissage* unfolds as a multi-linear, but also multi-dimensional texture or script — predictive, but also projective — determining space through temporal movement, yet at the same time 'suggesting a paradoxical ability to break free' (www.taniaruiiz.info).

With references both to Western and Eastern landscape traditions — to the Panorama as well as to the Chinese scroll — *Elsewhere* exposes the con-textual relationship between mobility and locality. Emphasising the inner texture of spatial constructs it also discloses the temporal dimension of 'site-specificity' — the latter being a concept that, according to art theorist Miwon Kwon, has moved 'fluidly through various cultures of artistic practice' (Kwon 2002, 57). In public art discourse site-specificity is a border concept. On the one hand, it marks the shift from a modernist affirmation of a progressive 'anywhere, everywhere and nowhere' (Kwon 1997, 109) to an engagement with an experientially grounded and authentic 'place'. On the other hand, it expresses scepticism as to this celebration of a genuine locality that would resist modern mobilisation and commodification. As an alternative to 'place', 'site' is a conception that stresses the specific practices needed for its establishment. As opposed to place, site is not simply a sensorial here-and-now, but also an informational locus, a theme, a topic or a con-textual issue (Kwon 2002; Burns and Kahn, 2005); a result of discursive activities such as negotiating, reconfiguring, debating, compromising, exchanging, relating and investing. Consequently, site-specificity is a differentiating notion, which facilitates 'the continuous mobilisation of self- and place identities as discursive fiction' (Kwon 1997, 109; Gabrielsson 2006, 287).

Projective and extra-sensorial, 'site' is, however, ambiguous. As a locus for 'staging mobilities', site gains new importance, and not only as a means for constructive and critical revaluation of local potentials. 'Site' also indicates possible commodification, enabling serial exploitation and exotisation of 'one place after another' (Kwon 2002, 57, 2004).

Elsewhere draws on this site-ambiguity. While being a part of the geo-political machinery, which feeds sites and destinations into the circuits of the global panorama, the artwork introduces what I in the following will refer to as *extra-situational*, as a locational ‘stammering’, revealing not simply the ‘otherness’ but the ‘becoming-other’ of locations. In the rational context of the station space, this discontinuous locational emergence has an estranging but also materialising effect. Technically speaking, cuts and delays are disturbances as concerns the privileged view; they here appear as minor rhetoric devices, acting out the very conditions of site production and site circulation. The installation is thus not simply a playback of idiosyncratic landscapes and places. Rather, it deliberately stages a rebound effect, which actualises the persistent tension between, on the one hand, itinerant localities and, on the other, a mobility that is never entirely in place.

3. *Dispersed geographies*

If part of the tension evoked by *Elsewhere* emanates from the transient character of ‘presence’ and ‘locality’ in contemporary culture, another part stems from the difficulties to localise a ‘self’. In world of situated stammering and off-site mobility, what is the difference between being ‘out of place’ and being ‘subjected’ to a mobility structure? And what kind of navigation does such a situation require?

Not surprisingly, this troubled status of the subject has motivated the development of new orientational practices, course-plotting counter-cartographies spanning from melancholic pilgrimage (Bonnet 2009; Bowring 2011) to ‘post-identitarian’ nomadism (d’Andrea 2006; Deleuze and Guattari 2006). Drawing on the legacy of an ‘unsettling’ artistic and poetic avant-garde, these practices present attempts to question given viewpoints, to sensitise space and to actualise geography as embodied, performative, non-representational ‘incorporation’ (Thrift 2007; 2012; Vannini and Taggart 2013, 227).

Mobility scholars also increasingly refer to artistic practice as a means of problematizing movement, dislocation or mediation, from both an agent’s and a structural perspective. Anne Jensen, for example, has drawn attention to the diverse lenses through which different movements can be made visible (or invisible). Thus, she highlights the power that is based on the monitoring of mobilities and mobile subjects, and conversely, the empowering dimension associated with sensitising practices (Jensen, A. 2011). Equally significant are the overlaps between artistic practice and the phenomenon of urban exploration as a roaming appropriation of spatial margins and disregarded passages. As Bonnet and others have argued, the mission of such embodied and transient urban enquiry was, and still is, to unveil the power play of urban space, including its ludic qualities (Bonnet 1996; Pinder 2005). This emphasis of research on physically sensitised forms of urban mobilities has also encouraged further methodological experiments with artistically informed and spatially enacted investigations, such as various forms of ‘walking-talking’ ethnographies or different forms of embodied mapping of translocal or transnational experiences (Tolia-Kelly 2008; Pinder 2011; Myers 2011, 187; O’Rourke 2013). Another example is offered by Rowan Wilken, who discusses the ways in which, today, mobile forms of artistic representations like mobile gaming and mobile media art support cross-border mobility and afford physical encounters with strangers. Wilken describes the intensifying potentials of media art as materialising vision and generating affect: the ‘bonding’ aspects’ of media art, or the ‘haptic vision’ it provides (Wilken 2009, 450 and 463). According to Wilken, media art serves as a reminder of the fundamental connectivity or tactile aspect of mobile network technologies and the fact that, as Sheller and Urry have expressed it, ‘things are made *close* through these networked relations, and both *closeness* and *distance* are made or unmade, rather than being simple objective measures of geographical placement’ (2006, 8).

This embracement of artistic interference reflects a demand for geographical methods beyond measurement and demarcation: methods that would cover stray movements and

peculiar perspectives. In a situation, where ontological continents have disintegrated into archipelagos, artistically inspired intervention may offer what Hannam, Sheller and Urry have designated as more or less venturesome ‘moorings’ (2006, 1): instances of re-territorialisation that may ‘configure and enable mobilities’ (2006, 3), but which might also intervene with an invasive and ubiquitous mobility apparatus that has become naturalised and involuntarily taken for granted.

A generic term for such methods is ‘psychogeography’ — a notion that today refers to a wide range of artistically informed mapping schemes, often cinematically mediated. The *Robinson* films of British filmmaker Patrick Keiller offer one example. As itinerant visual narratives through a splintered, post-Thatcherite England, Keiller’s work captures the paradoxical coincidences of immobilities and escape routes (Keiller 1994, 1997, 2009, 2010). The video work of French artist Dominique Gonzalez Foerster similarly attempts to grasp the enigma of location. Voyaging through a number of global cities — Rio, Taipei, Kyoto, Brasilia and others — Foerster presents an occasional and serial locality (Gonzalez Foerster 2006) emerging from in between cosmopolitan relocation and associative drift. Another example is American filmmaker Thom Andersen, who approaches the floating Californian mediascape (Andersen 2003, 2010, 2011) in a comparable, provisional way, mapping out the ways in which the sedentary and the nomadic, the local and the fictive interrupt one another. In *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003), the self-referential voice-over reminds us about the fact that ‘movies aren’t about places, they are about stories’. Consequently, through movies, we realise that cities are ‘never located anywhere exactly’ (Andersen 2003); — a laconic negativity that was further explored in *Get out of the Car* (2010).

Although drawing more or less clearly on the constructivist ‘city symphony’ tradition [2], what these and related cinematic psychogeographers present is best described as a poetics of absence (Petit and Sinclair 2002; Kelly and Evans 2003, Kelly 2005; Temple 2012). Like their romantic and literary sources of inspiration [3], their ambition might be to actualise a locational abundance. Yet what is initiated as an unconditioned exploration of global diversity often ends up in resigned reflections on the deflation of local meaning under the pressure of global flows. Furthermore, sifted through the vaguely articulated and distant poetic soul of a privileged wanderer, such emotional geographies often constitute uncritical attempts to reconstruct a general human subject and re-establish the authenticity of place.

Nevertheless, as counter-mapping combining embodied interaction, local history and poetic mediation, psychogeography has gained much attention. However, while ‘dwelling on the idiosyncratic and esoteric corners’ (Heartfield 2005), psychogeographies often appear paradoxically ‘errant’ (Pinder 2011), yet confusingly obsessed with the authentic and particular. Yet what makes ‘psychogeography’ interesting may be precisely this fundamental spatial and subjective ambiguity. As much as it draws on romantic *flânerie*, psychogeographic wandering being superseded by the obsessive movement of the *stalker*: ‘...journeys made with intent — sharp-eyed and unsponsored’ (Sinclair, quoted in Coverly 2006, 120). Haunting rather than wandering, the figure of the stalker intensifies the embodied dimensions of psychogeography, drawing attention to a necessary disrespect for borders, including those between fiction and reality.

In this sense stalking comes closer to the polemical, ‘unsponsored’ drifting that constituted the point of departure for early Situationist psychogeography. Provokingly persecuting all forms of institutional territories, including that of Fine Art, the Situationist maps were stalking devices, allowing interfering criss-crossing through a ‘naked city’ [4], which, stripped of its representational covering, constituted a battlefield of spectacular, discursive and territorial moves. Considering the mainstreaming of psychogeography, it is important to recall its original destabilising cinematic logic and its haptic attacks on spectacular arrangements and representational regimes (Debord 1952; 1961; 1973) [5]. In its Situationist incarnation,

psychogeography was primarily spatially decentred and incomplete, repetitively taking as the point of departure the unsettling fact that ‘[w]e don’t know what to say’ (Debord 1961).

While contesting the more fatalistic aspects of psychogeography, contemporary videographers, like Swiss artist Ursula Biemann, similarly explore disputed territories, border crossings and zones of exception. Yet rather than tracking dislocated subjectivities, Biemann explores the execution of power through geographic practice, including the effects of global, technological geographies on bodies and sites. Following clandestine transit migration and registering local effects of global infrastructural investments, Biemann pieces together heterogeneous ‘videographies’ to a fragmentary human geography (Biemann 2008, 64), presenting glimpses not only of the physical landscape, but as much of the increasingly powerful landscapes of circulating imagery. Biemann’s video essays are ‘mission reports’ or secret intelligence ‘files’ channelling the ground leakage from those exploited territories and contested border zones normally excluded from visual data flows and recognized mediascapes. The aesthetic tactics of Biemann could in this sense be described as a *dérive* into ‘the lesser debris’ (Biemann 2008, 64) of what is indeed a disturbed media ecology.

Although not operating along the same explicitly contested frontlines, Ruiz Gutierrez’ videography presents a similar, self-effacing counter-geography, conditioned by intertwined processes of territorialisation and imaging. What the flow of place-related visual data actualises are the shortcomings of a conventional understanding of landscape as a scenic unity possible to formally designate, characterise and classify. Yet today, spatial understanding is not simply a question of overlooking and including more and on a more detailed level. Instead, as geographer John Allen expresses it in his reflection upon shifting geographies, it is a matter of recognizing the power relationships, which not only ‘compose the spaces of which they are a part’, but also configure the distances ‘between powerful and not so powerful actors’ (Allen 2011, 284). According to Allen, rather than lamenting lost places, counter-geographies defy given configurations, demarcations and taken for granted spatial continuities.



In more than one sense, *Elsewhere* constitutes an articulation of the shift that Allen describes — a shift of focus from ‘geometries’ to ‘topologies’ (Allen 2011) — its relevance

depending on its ability to activate the ‘topological equation’ according to which location unfolds as a result of the power play of representation, including processes of circulation, mediation and association. Accordingly, ‘site’ is a dynamic that directly affects the conditions for agents of various kinds to take place in or interfere with the mediation of ‘here-and-now’; a mediation that is asymmetrical, charged and transformative, continuously reconfiguring the relationship between presence and absence. In this sense, mediation is neither neutral, nor a subjective drift, but the very mobilisation of localities and identities, potentially enabling also what is distant to gain a stalking attendance.

The question is then, of course, to what extent *Elsewhere* — as artistically informed geographic mediation — manages to agitate this power equation and bring inequalities into sight. ‘One notes’, Raymond Bellour writes in his commentary, ‘the ethical choice according to which this variety has been treated in such a way as to not flinch from the reality of the world, unlike the advertising images that now pervade so many public spaces’ (Bellour 2010, 15). Differing from the sited *mélange* of commercials or the spatial diversity of branding campaigns, Bellour suggests, *Elsewhere* presents another kind of locality mobilisation: one that acts upon a ‘worldly reality’ — temporarily liberated from the over-determining add-ons and voice-overs of financial flows. The ethical aspect of *Elsewhere* has to do with its capacity to call attention to geographical infra-structuring as a selective and discriminating practice. Is it possible, simply by actualising the stammering representational partiality of the mobility machinery, to reveal the incriminating liaisons between circulation, mediation and control? Is it possible, simply through the articulation of an ‘ethical choice’, to interfere with the mobility apparatus and make its selective operations explicit?

What remains unresolved is the ‘cosmopolitan’ dimension of the ‘mobility dilemma’, defined by political philosopher Seyla Benhabib inter alia as the dilemma of how to ‘mediate moral universalism with ethical particularism’ (2007, 451). How is it possible to combine visions of mobility with the justification of exclusions and territorial cuts? Lacking affirmative representations of a mobile and shifting world, ‘[w]e are like travellers navigating an unknown terrain with the help of old maps, drawn at a different time and in response to different needs’ (Benhabib 2004, 2). While the need for positive expressions of an all-embracing multiplicity that, as cultural theorist Homi Bhabha has expressed it, ‘readily celebrates a world of plural cultures and peoples located at the periphery’ (Bhabha 1994/2004, xiv) does not decrease, the belief that increased connectedness in itself is set ‘to foster a cosmopolitan cultural outlook’ (Tomlinson 2011, 347) weakens. As long as it produces ‘healthy margins within metropolitan societies’ (Bhabha 1994/2004, xiv), connectedness is cherished, given that it does not seriously challenge the boundless mobility of capital, technology and imagery.

As a commissioned work operating from within the twisted premises of the cosmopolitan dilemma, *Elsewhere* may be both criticized and co-opted. Yet, as Bellour points out, the work presents a persistent choice that does not emanate from the sites themselves, but that is materially and technologically embedded; a choice that is played out through the mechanisms of production, distribution and reception. The work not only projects margins and peripheries, but performs a ‘boundary work’ (Silverstone 2007, 19), exposing an ‘unhomeliness’ (Bhabha 1994/2004, 13) that actualises the blanks of the cosmopolitan vision. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha referred to the Freudian *das Unheimliche* — the ‘estranging sense of the relocation of home and the world [...] — that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations’ (Bhabha 1994/2004, 13). This condition is the moral condition of the mobility-scapes, a condition beyond connectivity: ‘The globe shrinks for those who own it; for the displaced or the dispossessed, the migrant or refugee, no distance is more awesome than the few feet across borders or frontiers’ (Bhabha 1994/2004, 110).

4. *Cosmopolitical play*

The multitudes of travellers waiting on the lower platforms in Malmö Central Station are surely not only passengers enjoying a panoramic ride, but also more or less potent actors in a subtle, cosmopolitical play. Observing this play on location — how people interact with the stream of images, how they reposition themselves in relation to the projections or how they try to ignore the conspicuous flow — is a different undertaking in the light of the political asymmetries embedded. While the geographical paradoxes of the installation will eventually occur to the waiting travellers, modifications, gaps and cuts will strike them selectively. What people see or feel ‘with all the eyes of the body’, as Bellour expresses it, depends on ‘the discrepancy between what they anticipate and what they receive’ (Bellour 2010, 27) — on the unevenly distributed effects of the relative scope of mobilities and the width and porosity of borders.

The context of *Elsewhere* is a transnational metropolitan border region undergoing rapid transformation. Most travellers across the border are commuters and tourists, while a minority are migrants, asylum seekers and illegal border-crossers [6]. Although this border is relatively unguarded, it is still far from the borderless area envisioned in place-marketing videos [7] or, for that matter, in the Schengen Agreement [8]. In 2012, around 44,000 people applied for asylum in Sweden. In the same year, fewer than a third were finally granted the right to stay. This tendency was recently reinforced by a massive repatriation campaign and intensification of the hunt for *sans-papiers* cofounded by the European Return Fund [9].

Although addressed by nomadic geographies and utopian cosmopolitanisms, the question of mobilities *extra situ*, beyond the situational, remains unresolved. Through their unsettled presence, rootless migrants and refugees reveal the fragility of a world ‘in which states, while enabling the movement of capital, money and commodities at ever-faster speeds across boundaries, catch, imprison, maim and even kill human beings who try to do the same’ (Benhabib 2007, 458). The idea of wandering nomadism hardly offers a closure. Instead, the nomadic is often fuelled by ambiguous enticement, described by Alastair Bonnet as a ‘free-floating sense of loss that presents permanent marginality and “the alienated life” as a political identity’ (Bonnet 2006, 23). Contemporary critics of cosmopolitanism thereby rightly target what is considered an increasingly exhausted anthropocentrism, moreover, based on an untenable conception of a free and agile human will, all the more unsustainable against the background of compulsive mobilities and enforced belongings.

In her philosophy of exteriority, Isabel Stengers approaches what she describes as a misunderstanding concerning what is often a dichotomizing distinction between nomadic and sedentary. ‘We know,’ she says, ‘that sedentary populations have turned their back on nomadic people’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 363). But, she continues, when the distinction becomes metaphoric, transferred to a level of spatio-temporal understanding, then ‘it is the sedentary populations that become the object of scorn, peoples who cling to existential, professional, or cultural territories and reject the challenges of modernity’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 363). The place-bound is the retarded and inert, which characterise popular opinion, while the nomadic is that which willingly allows for detachment from beliefs and customs, that which readily leaves the well known behind and ‘follows a problem wherever it may lead’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 363) [10].

According to Stengers, the alternative to sedentary scepticism as well as escapist cosmopolitanism is to be ‘positively nonmodern’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 354): neither to become territorialised by site-specificities, nor to disregard ‘the danger that nomadism might become a norm’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 366), but recognise the value of staying put as well and consider the relationship between agency, matter and resources. In positive, ‘onto-topological’ terms, this would cancel out the ‘critique of separation’ that preoccupies critical geographies, replacing ‘the radical nostalgia’ of loss (Bonnet, 2009) with a resourceful ‘ecology of practices’, by Stengers referred to as *cosmopolitics* (Stengers 2003/2011, 355).

For Stengers, the prefix ‘cosmo-’ has nothing to do with generalising universality. Instead, it ‘makes present, helps resonate, the unknown affecting *our* questions that our political tradition is at significant risk of disqualifying’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 255). The prefix reinvents and expands what it means ‘to belong’ or ‘to pertain’ (Stengers in Latour 2004, 454) and counteracts the tendency in spatial thinking to embrace an exclusively human power play alone. Correspondingly, the presence of *politics* prevents ‘cosmos’ from being understood as a given, ‘natural’ and predetermined entity; instead, its unrealised potentiality is recognised. ‘Cosmopolitics’ thus signals a dynamics of material entanglement and raises the question of coexistence — of alternative modes of living that would, as Stengers expresses it, ‘bring together our cities, where politics was invented, and those other places where the question of closure and transmission has invented other solutions for itself’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 256). ‘Those other places’ are yet unknown elsewheres, but also always part of the present cosmopolitical reality of the world.

Rather than mobility, the notion of cosmopolitics thus evokes *encounter*. As we come to terms with the unlikelihood of escape, not least to the absolute elsewhere or refuge we have come to call Nature, the ecological question of *how to realise* — how ‘to implement a possibility’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 192) — can be given full scope. Hence, cosmopolitics presents an attempt to conceptualise a here-and-now world of constructive agency, a world devoid of negativities but inherently charged with ‘elsewheres’ or other spaces, in which current definitions have no apparent meaning. Yet cosmopolitics is about not ‘re-enchantment’, but recognition of ‘the mode in which the problematic copresence of practices may be actualized’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 372). This ‘problematic copresence’ is a form of asymmetrical yet reciprocal situational capture, that ‘guarantees nothing, authorizes nothing, and cannot be stabilized by any constraint, but through which the two poles of the exchange undergo a transformation that cannot be appropriated by any objective definition’ (Stengers 2003/2011, 372). For Stengers, the world is an open-ended occasion, at the same time situated and transformative.

Yet, the question remains whether cosmopolitics provides the longed-for all-encompassing closure in the discussion about mobility and locality. The objections raised against cosmopolitics concerns precisely this: that despite its inclusive attempts to attribute to more actants both agency and presence, its positivity has tended to divert attention away from the different ways in which socio-political categories such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexuality, class, and religion still transect, produce, affect and spatially distribute subjects and sites (Watson 2011:56; Contreras 2010:56). The limitations of cosmopolitics may be its very inclusive idea of the world as a space where coexistence is dynamically regulated and continuously emergent, yet where the mechanisms of ‘Othering’ (Said 1979) remain obscure. According to critics, cosmopolitics ‘fails to sufficiently consider how networks enact negative exclusions or “cuts”’ (Watson 2011, 59). Although, in cosmopolitical terms, the ‘excluded’ would always function as a positive corrective, the cosmopolitical still depends on ‘constitutive exclusions’ (Watson 2011, 67), described even by the most dedicated cosmopolitical advocate as the ‘dumping ground of a given collective’ (Latour 2004, 124).

While the intention behind cosmopolitics is to contest every bifurcation of the world into irreconcilable opposites, such as nomadic and sedentary or inside and outside, the risk is that of disregarding the very staging of asymmetries. As a positive ontology embracing materiality and agency, cosmopolitics does not necessarily provide any tools for understanding symbolic value systems or media ecologies, which may reproduce value regimes, reinforce social inequalities and peg down spatial gaps. Although affirming encounters, cosmopolitics might therefore unfold as a new form of colonialism, producing a new kind of non-recognised ‘subaltern’ (Chakrabarty 2002; Watson 2011) elsewhere. Ecologies, as systems of circulation and mobility, are also power-topologies, secreting residues onto dumping grounds. While

recognising this, the central question would be how to stay with rather than reach beyond the dilemma of nomadic and sedentary, distribution and assemblage, agents and networks. There is also, in cosmopolitical ecology, a number of ‘elsewheres’ at play, potentially lurking in the background, or in the corners of our imagination.



5. Discussion — mobilities in and out of place

Returning to the platforms of Malmö Central, we are again confronted by the question of how to relate to and move through ‘the world’ — ‘our world’. *Elsewhere* provides no one answer: The outcome of a four-year odyssey by the most diverse vehicles to the most unpredictable locations, the installation might be understood as everything from a poetic comment on the Lumière Brothers’ colonialising amassment of recordings from near and far, to a political intervention with a perverted nation state system of territorial control. Yet, while to a certain extent playing on a kind of spectacular, geographical hubris, the stationary video installation and its supporting database also provide a sensitising lens through which to reconsider the spatial and material conditions of world-making, including the kinaesthetic performances through which localities are continuously staged, monitored and circulated.

Against the moving background, the question of art’s potentiality reappears. To what extent can a public artwork such as *Elsewhere* generate affects beyond the privileged traveller’s suspension of territorial disbelief? To what extent does it manage to provoke the spatial *entre-images* (Bellour 1990, 1999) or *sans-lieux* of contemporary power-topologies? How does it incorporate the unsettling ‘afterimages’ (Doel and Clarke 2007) of the geopolitical spectacle? And how far does the commissioned work manage to call into question the territorialising apparatus of which it is a part?

In a recent lecture [11], Tania Ruiz Gutierrez commented on the fact that while working

on *Elsewhere*, she did not yet hold a French passport. As a Colombian citizen, she was obliged to submit to special visa rules and regulations, to a border politics not only controlling locations and mobilities but also classifying identities and belongings. As an equivalent, it comes as no surprise, that while the waiting travellers in Malmö Central Lower are carried away by 46 translocational projections, they are simultaneously captured and monitored by 140 surveillance cameras, all of which play a far from ignorable role in the functioning and maintenance of this specific system of here and elsewhere.

Even though these aspects are not directly present in the art installation, they are the kinaesthetic conditions implicitly activated through its unsettling mobilising. The silent stream of 'elsewheres' constitutes a visual river that, in a critical way, 'gives itself to be seen instead of disappearing in what it makes visible' (Agamben 2002, 317–318). Read from this point of view, Ruiz Gutierrez' work opens up not only towards the constructedness and materiality of a here-and-now, but also towards a disconcerting 'optical unconscious' (Benjamin 1985, 243), undermining a supposedly all-encompassing, territoriality. In his auto-ethnographic account '*Illegal*' Traveller, the Swedish-Iranian anthropologist Shahram Khosravi delivers a poignant reminder of this innate dimension. Referring both to his own non-sanctioned travelling and to the writings of Étienne Balibar, Khosravi calls attention to the secondary effects of the territorial play: agonising immobilities as well as precarious passages. Today, people are no longer expelled by borders but forced to *be* border, their lives no longer unfolding 'elsewhere' but in and as the blind spot of a waiting platform, as a detached and unrecognized anywhere (Balibar 2002, 84; Khosravi 2011, 99).

In the previous, I have employed the example of a public art installation to approach the dilemma of mobility and locality, a dilemma that also can be described as the cosmopolitical dilemma of margins and borders. Contemporary artistic practice is of particular interest in this respect, as it presents what art theorist Nikos Papastergiadis has described as 'a conjunctural space where aesthetic concerns over the invention of forms meet political debates on the vitality of the public sphere' (Papastergiadis, 2010, 5). While art operates in a new situation of global flows and networks, it also adopts new modes and new interstitial spaces, generating new kinds of partly disturbing and unsettling, partly disclosing and widening feedback loops, bringing into sight the conditioning forces of a cosmopolitical ecology. These loops are forms of mobility that exceed the site-specific as grounded in a specific, experiential place. They are also recurring, stalking movements beyond the privileged margins of a free-floating subjectivism. Instead, what the dispersed and stammering flow of *Elsewhere* projects is an emergent cosmopolitical imaginary that takes off from an expanded locality and proceeds towards a continuously problematic and paradoxical co-presence. While not only recognising the power play of nomadic and sedentary as a politics of transformative encounter but also performing the relationship between mobility and locality in all its contradiction, the artwork at Malmö Central adds to the cosmopolitical a cosmo-aesthetic dimension of curiosity — an extra-situational movement towards locations not yet known. Emerging is the invasive 'locality' that today constitutes the world; a torrent of 'elsewheres' — *ailleurs, annorstäder* — conspicuously affecting the routes of everyday travellers.

As I frequently hurry through Malmö Central, one of the many video sequences in particular sticks to my retina. Potentially from somewhere in Latin America, it is a shot of a village landscape, with a donkey in the foreground. On my way forward, I become aware of the donkey, which, only seeming to be indifferent, observes my every step. Reaching the make-believe train window frame, the donkey disappears, absorbed by the concrete wall. As I manage to shake off its persistent and judgmental glance, the donkey suddenly reappears again, behind my shoulder, its gaze only intensified, offensively questioning the legitimate grounds for my passing.

Reflected in that gaze is not the nostalgic expression of paradises lost. Ultimately, it is an infinitely looped and conspicuous claim of a radicalising mobility with 'elsewheres' as its disturbing horizon.

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[1] The Øresund Link is the 17-km permanent (bridge and tunnel) link across the strait between Sweden and Denmark, inaugurated in the year 2000 and incorporating a movement meter, the twofold work *The Tower and The Pavilion* by Olafur Eliasson.

[2] In the 1920s, the cinematic avant-garde often engaged directly and explicitly with an emergent modern metropolis, resulting in a small genre of films that became known as ‘city symphonies’: movies attempting to capture the spirit and intensity of the city in a montage of everyday life. For a discussion, see Penz and Lu (2011).

[3] As in, for example, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) or Arthur Machen’s *The London Adventure or The Art of Wandering* (1924). See also Coverly 2006.

[4] The Métro Map was a source of inspiration for the iconic psychogeographic maps coproduced by Guy Debord and Asger Jorn in 1959. One of these maps, entitled ‘Naked City’, referred directly to Weegee’s revealing photographic coverage of crime scenes in New York (Arthur Fellig Weegee 1945/1975), and to Jules Dassin’s film noir *Naked City* (USA, 1948).

[5] The most conspicuous example may be Debord’s first film *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*, a 64-minute, mostly over-exposed and non-exposed, film strip mixing black passages with white and grainy sequences with disconnected recitations. The first attempt to screen it took place in June 1952, in Ciné-Club d’Avant-Gardes at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris, where it was interrupted by a raging audience. See also Scott Foundas’s blog, *LA Weekly* net edition, 2 March 2009, <http://blogs.laweekly.com/foundas/>. Retrieved on 7 March 2011.

[6] The Øresund Region, recently renamed the Copenhagen-Malmö Region counts 3.8 million inhabitants, a third of whom live on the Danish side (<http://www.orestat.se>). Of the approximately 90,000 people who cross the border every day, 18,000 commute by train, and of these commuters 96% live in Sweden and work in Denmark. Between 2000 and 2007, 22,500 Danes moved to Southern Sweden. Today, although the migrant flows have turned owing to the recession, the Danes constitute the largest immigrant community in Malmö (<http://www.orestat.se>). Restrictive Danish family immigration laws have also prevented Danes from marrying and living in Denmark with non-European spouses, forcing many second-generation immigrants to cross what is ironically referred to as the ‘Love Bridge’ and move to Sweden (article in the webzine *The World*, 24 October 2012, <http://www.theworld.org/2012/10/love-bridge-sweden-denmark/>). Today, the city of Malmö has some 300,000 inhabitants, 30% of whom were born outside Sweden. Nearly half the population (48%) is under the age of 35. Since the City Tunnel opened in 2010, transnational mobility has increased further — by as much as 12% in 2012 (http://www.malmobusiness.com/sites/default/files/filearchive/malmolaget_arsrapport_2010.pdf).

[7] See, for example, the promotional video *Copenhagen/Øresund — One Destination, Two Countries* (Wonderful Copenhagen, Anders Garde Kongshaug 2005), http://www.oresundfilm.com/about_the_region/two_countries/index.php?view=1. Retrieved on 16 October 2013.

[8] On the European Commission’s Home Affairs website, the Schengen Agreement is described as follows: ‘The Schengen Area is one of the greatest achievements of the EU. It is an area without internal borders, an area within which citizens, many non-EU nationals, business people and tourists can freely circulate without being subjected to border checks.’ See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/index_en.htm.

[9] Statistics published by the Swedish Migration Board, http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/790_en.html. At the time of writing, intensive debate about the pilot repatriation project REVA is under way in the Swedish media. Partly funded by the European Return Fund, REVA was used increasingly in the winter of 2012–13 to legitimise random identity checks in public places, such as outside schools and hospitals, to locate undocumented people and arrange their ultimate deportation. The acronym REVA stands for *Rättssäkert och Effektivt Verkställighets-Arbete* (‘Legal Certainty and Effective Enforcement’) and the Swedish noun *reva*, paradoxically enough, also means ‘rip’ (<http://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Board/Our-mission/Organisation/Cooperation-with-others/Project-Reva.html>).

[10] Stengers is here referring to the fundamental sociological discussion of the relationship between the local and the world, and as a parallel, between the sedentary and the nomadic, or mobile. For early sociologists like Durkheim, ‘the social’ constituted an abstract category, an inclusive and universal *cosmopolitisme* based on *un amour propre social* and emanating from the (modern) broadening of experience beyond the local, the provincial, and the patriotic. Similarly, for Merton (1957), the use of the terms local and cosmopolitan offered an explanation of social differentiation similar to that of social class, where localism would correspond to the sedentary mode of social participation of the lower classes and cosmopolitanism, consequently, to the more agile forms of participation of the privileged ranks (Merton in Thielbar 1970, 244). For an extended discussion, see also Turner, 2006.

[11] Tania Ruiz Gutierrez gave her honorary doctorate lecture *Revisiting Elsewhere* at Malmö University on 16 October 2013.