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Timescapes. The Logic of the Sentence

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There is more logic in a sentence than in a speech.[1]

Instead of explaining everything with the purportedly imperative law of evolution
that demands the reproduction of phenomena as a whole and their identical repetition
in a certain order, and instead of explaining the small with the large, the detail with the bulk, I explain the similarities of the entirety with the joining of small,
elementary actions, the large with the small, the bulk with the detail. [2]
(Gabriel Tarde)

Timescapes[3] investigates non-linear editing as a constituent force of what is held in common against the power politics of segmenting memory, communication and the spaces of imagining; video production is understood here as memory work, which develops the potential of mnemonic narrative and assesses geography not through the representation of a filmed object, but rather through narrative structures and editing strategies arising through the emotions of the image streams.

Vectors of time in the image (its becoming, its history, its associative potential) can be formed in the editing: what is to resonate between the current image, its mnemonic potential and its future appearance, and what is present as the possibility of an artistic and ethical decision, is the work of editing. What is contained in this as subjectivity cannot simply be reduced to an individual comparison of current and virtual experiences of time, because our intellectual work is bound to the capacity of our action and "subjectivity is never only ours", for "it is time"[4]. The mode of access in editing affords us the possibility of drawing conclusions about the relationship between the spaces of imagining, geography and image spaces. The essential capital of video technology lies in the possibility of shaping movement that is found in thought and making it accessible to us as a topology of times.

Imaginary Geographies

Timescapes/B-Zone investigates mnemonic potentials of the video image in the editing process and the relationship between mobility and subjectivity within a geographical region that is conjoined by the construction of European infrastructure projects on the one hand and by migration routes on the other. The authors/producers of the project work in Ankara, Hakkari, Tavsanli, Athens, Thessaloniki, Belgrade, Cologne and on the "Highway of Brotherhood and Unity" between Munich and Thessaloniki. In addition to its trans-national meanings, this situation corresponds to a dispersed space of communication: a place-to-place relationship, an "A_B" space or a "relative" space, which had to be continuously translated in the project. The term B-Zone indicates not only an essential confinement, but also the reversible power potential anchored in it: if the relationship between the A- and the B-Zone is successfully integrated into a global project thinking

through the different flexibility of local conditions and generates new economies, then this success is constituent for the survival of the A-Zone. In this way the B-Zone becomes the political and economic space of a trial action that can be adapted by the A-Zone in the future.

Corridors of Subjection

Timescapes/B-Zone follows the "old European axis"[5] along the Baghdad Railway, which was celebrated at the end of the 19th century as a brilliant economic idea, and through which private enterprises were contractually assured of territorial rights in the Ottoman Empire for the first time in Europe. Today the European Union places the expansion of so-called corridors (roads, communication technologies, oil pipelines) in the form of so-called "public-private partnerships" at the center of its expansion policies (EU programs: TENT – TransEuropean Transport Corridors, PETRA – PanEuropean Transport Corridors, TRACECA – TransEuropean Asian Corridors). Today Corridor III from Berlin to Kiev is planned to extend all the way to China. Corridor X, through Zagreb, Belgrade, Skopje and Thessaloniki, largely follows the geographical line of the Baghdad Railway. The interlinking of the European region, which started in the 19th century with post-colonial infrastructure projects like the Baghdad Railway, and which served the constitution of a new national identity with the "Highway of Brotherhood and Unity" or the "*Autoput*" in Yugoslavia, became a geography of migration in an inverted sense in the 20th century.

The Logic of the Sentence (Singularity, Detail) in Migration

As a migrant one lives in a world of differences, singularities, heterogeneities (the “here” that one has migrated into and the “there” that one comes from; the mother tongue and the language that has to be learned and the culture that has to be adapted). One lives several worlds at the same time, but cannot reduce them to one world: they have to be allowed to exist simultaneously. If they are placed opposite one another, differences are transformed into oppositions and one risks destruction. To avoid this destruction one looks at the singular from a close distance and can see how one detail can be linked with the next detail in every single situation, one singularity with the next. Oppositions can be transformed through the ability to adapt, in other words through creation and innovation. As a migrant, in a sense one is compelled daily to practice a kind of “non-linear editing”, which means linking heterogeneous elements in one's thinking and actions, which would normally be regarded as contradictory. The kind of action that results is a “micropolitical” behavior, which is denied and ignored by the macropolitical dimension.

Through the movement situation of migration, a way of thinking developed with photography, film and video technology that must comprise the spaces of imagining and the dimension of distribution, which records journeying, here/there narratives, and processes of de- and re-territorialization. Image production is a vital mechanism of migration, because movement is communicated through it and it is constituent for the spatial relationships of diaspora. Private photography as visual memory plays an important role in conveying the history of migration. Images journey and invite journeying. Photography becomes a point of linkage in the act of narration, part of migrant mnemonic techniques. These mnemonic technique potentials serve a logic of details establishing a path of the image in the imagination. In a kind of performative

act of editing, the image that flows into the narrative becomes part of the processes of re-territorialization (actualization), the non-linear dimension of which bears witness to thinking that moves physically (virtualization).

The Logic of the Sentence in Editing

According to Gabriel Tarde, the logical potential of the sentence is more effective than the logic of the discourse, because it neglects details less in their singularity. “There is more logic in a sentence than in a speech, more logic in the small than in the grand. To understand a phenomenon, one need not rise up so high until one has a panoramic view of the grand ensemble, but should rather stay with the singularity of the detail, the small difference of each phenomenon.”[6] But what is this logic of the sentence, of the detail in the moving image? In the editing process, one starts by perusing images and comparing them, where relevant, with experiences of the location. Usually new, unforeseen events occur in this perusal: single shots become key images and significant for the construction of the narrative. They indicate something beyond the space where they were shot, detach themselves from it, suggest other spaces, contexts, times and potentials. They contain a surplus of reality that invokes other realities, a potential of linkage that is found in the microscopic material of the image and is perceived as an intensity that mobilizes our memory. This “sentence logic” in image production operates similarly to the logical potential of the name in Walter Benjamin's writing: “Name”, according to Benjamin, “is not only the last utterance of language but also the true call of it.”[7] This follows a logic that not only designates, but also refers and sends.

The logic of the discourse, on the other hand, can be understood as an image representation, in which "panoramic illusions"[8] are at work: illusions that neglect details in their singularity in order to construct the view of the grand ensemble. "The panoramic illusion makes us believe that the arrangement of the facts only becomes perceptible, when they stand out from their irregular detail"[9] until they embrace "the panoramic view of the grand ensemble"[10].

With the means of non-linear editing, the references and invocations in the image can be followed to the link without concern for continuity or balance/unity between the space and time of the narrative (realism) and without losing the context of an ensemble. Instead of eliminating heterogeneous elements in their detail logic as obstructive forces in the panorama, the possibility of manipulation enables non-linear editing to move the digital image to a molecular plane, to make fields of resonance and intensity vibrate with one another, to layer images and conjoin them in their detailed microscopy with other elements, other possible planes of time. Linking details with details without losing coherence or continuity is possible if the potentiality of the fragment for its references, its movement, is taken into consideration at every moment. As soon as this "logic of the sentence" is abandoned, the possible potential of a cartography inherent to it is lost: virtual time vanishes in the presence of a disjunctive collection, a closed perspective; the space offers no possibility of passage. In the editing process a narration can be drawn from singularities, differences, details, if a different regime of the perception of time can be opened up and links can be processed in terms of the multiple possibilities of their references. At the same time, the functionalization of time in the sense of a panoramic illusion must

be continuously relinquished. It is exactly here that the time economy of the media industry operates the other way around.

The Non-Linear Illusion

The programmatic schemata in the video image, in other words the possibilities of switching and linking, constitute the mnemonic potential of our spatial imagination, which refers, forwards, distributes and establishes a non-linear dimension. Thus if non-linearity in the editing forms what happens through the logic of the sentence, then this is a formal characteristic of image mobilization. However, this virtual potential also moves the motor of the information industry and its production systems. Non-linearity is simulated, in a sense, in the form of docutainment through certain aesthetics of camera and editing work, through the production machinery of networked news studios and their image agencies as a form of movement and perception of space. What is lacking here is the subjective experience of a movement that becomes imaginable through non-linearity.

If migration and its concomitant notions of space generate non-linearity as a form of thinking and acting, because one lives in between heterogeneous worlds and cultures, between the here and the there, then we must ask which space of movement and which kind of movement are the basis for the production of news. Is there a reversibility between non-linear forms and the notion of space? What happens when the non-linear form is used without being generated from a movement? Does this make us believe that every spatial event can be assembled with every other without losing the coherence of a subjective gaze direction? A gaze regime based on an all-seeing eye, whose movement is unrealistic, which does not need to resolve oppositions in real worlds, but brings

them into play with one another without taking the autonomous movement situation of a subject into account, continuously reproduces prefabricated hegemonies of subjectivities and constructs this notion of space medially. The irregular detail of the shot is staged for a fictive, static viewpoint (spatially and culturally) in an ideological form of a majority society.

The non-linear narration corresponds to the migrant movement's space of thinking and acting. The linking of details, the perception of singularities and their meaning with “other” worlds that are there or virtual is part of a minority praxis.

Images here do not copy and reproduce as replications, they leave the language usage of a notion established by the majority, acting instead as a reference in the movement situation of migration. The gesture of the migrant, the decision to go, to leave the past life, is a gesture of opening oneself up to an unfamiliar, new world, which can be dangerous and uncertain, but also holds many possibilities. It appeals to the future, to trust in the world and in the others (it is this “naive” faith that the wealthy and jaded North lacks most!). An unforeseeable and unpredictable process begins with this movement, which is full of risks and uncertainties, but also full of hope for realizing the possibilities that thus arise.

This act renews the world and its possibilities: world is not predetermined in it, it is not yet timed, but is instead a world that is just in the making and is yet to be made. A world in motion that also moves its own subjectivity, because this is also yet to be made, has to be produced and constructed. In this open world images and ideas do not simply depict, they do not copy, but add something to the world, completing and enriching it. Here the essential function of an image is not a suitable representation of a given reality or the emphasis of a correspondence between a real object and our

memory, but rather the image (and the idea) is that through which our consciousness finds its orientation, steering the flow of thought and images that it crosses. Isolated images, sentences, details lead to an unknown world. In migration their possible connections serve the cartography of a territory that cannot be recognized again, but must always be newly invented, must always be constructed. The potential of the logic of the sentence moves the work of the artist in exactly the same way.

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The videos of *Timescapes/B-Zone* now comprise five interlocking installations and two single-screen works. They were all edited from the material of the database, consisted largely of the same images and sounds, yet through the editing concept they drew different perspectives of the geography. My project "*Corridor X*" focuses the interpretation of the *Timescapes* database on the historical and contemporary significance of the socialist road-building project *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo* ("Highway of Brotherhood and Unity") in Ex-Yugoslavia. "*Corridor X*" describes the current situation of a territory, in which the conditions of mobility have fundamentally changed since 1991 and also determine the spatial thinking of a migrant community, for which the *Autoput* or the "Highway of Brotherhood and Unity" was, until the outbreak of the Yugoslavian wars, a collective, transcultural space of memory and a collective experience of journey.[11]

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[1] Gabriel Tarde, *Les Lois Sociales*, Oeuvres de Gabriel Tarde, Volume IV, Paris: Les Empècheurs de penser en rond, 1999, p. 115.

[2]Ibid., p. 63.

[3]Timescapes is a collaborative non-linear editing project in Southeastern Europe, in which a group of authors (filmmakers, media activists, artists) from Turkey (Octay Ince, the media collective Videa from Ankara), Greece (Freddy Viannelis), Serbia (Dragana Zarevac) and Germany (Hito Steyerl, Angela Melitopoulos) worked for over three years on a joint video database. See: http://www.videophilosophy.de

[4] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* London: The Athlone Press, 1989, p. 89.

[5]At the end of the Turkish-Russian wars the political balance between Russia, Austria-Hungary and England was renegotiated along the "European axis" at the Berlin Congress of 1878 headed by Bismarck, and the territories lost by the Ottoman Empire were redistributed.

[6] Gabriel Tarde, *Les Lois Sociales*, Oeuvres de Gabriel Tarde, Volume IV, Paris: Les Empècheurs de penser en rond, 1999, p. 115.

[7] Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" in: *One-way street, and other writings,* transl. by Edmund Jephcott, Kingsley Shorter, London: NLB, 1979, pp. 107-123, p. 112.

[8]„Le leurre panoramique qui nous fait croire que l'ordre des faits n'est perceptible que si l'on sort de leur détail essentiellment irrégulier pour s'elever très haut jusqu'à embrasser d'une vue panoramique de grands ensembles." (Gabriel Tarde, *Les Lois Sociales*, op. cit., Preface by Isaac Joseph, quotation from Joseph following Gabriel Tarde, p. 11.)

[9]ibid.

[10]Gabriel Tarde, op. cit., p. 115.

[11]The *Timescapes/B-Zone* projects are described in detail in the book publication: Angela Melitopoulos, Ursula Biemann, Lisa Parks, *B-Zone. Becoming Europe and Beyond*, Barcelona: Actar, 2006, http://www.fdk-berlin.de/de/arsenal-experimental/edition/b-zone-becoming-europe-and-beyond.html.