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How Do You Become a Successful Beggar in Sweden?

An inquiry into the images of begging and giving 2011 to 2016

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Cecilia Parsberg

How Do You Become a Successful Beggar in Sweden?

An inquiry into the images of begging and giving 2011 to 2016



DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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FACULTY OPPONENT

Dr. Professor Stefan Jonsson, Linköping University

Cecilia Parsberg presents the six staged works from her dissertation 10–11 am

How Do You Become a Successful Beggar in Sweden?

An inquiry into the images of begging and giving 2011 to 2016

Cecilia Parsberg



A thesis consisting of nine text chapters and six works of art

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Abstract

My first encounter with a begging person led me to spend five years investigating the new situation regarding begging and giving in Sweden. The premise is that every-day actions and reactions to another person can be made visible through aesthetics with ethical underpinnings. My investigation takes place mainly in the urban landscape and in the media. The images always constitute the point of departure for the reasoning and for the staged works. Images that separate as well as connect bodies. Which images are at play in the social choreography of begging and giving? In this context, how can images be activated in new ways? How can new images be generated? Begging is a call to social interaction, and regardless of whether the giver interacts socially with the begging person on the street, the giver is implicated in the asymmetrical value systems of the European Union. In my first staged work I hire a professional market researcher to find out how a beggar in Sweden should behave to be successful. This becomes a film that I then show opposite another film in which begging people talk about how givers give. This is followed by a number of staged works and an interdisciplinary theoretical discussion involving, among others, Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, and Hannah Arendt, as well as a number of artistic works concerning how images – and bodily actions – are linked to the social image and the body politics. The arrangement of the choirs in the staged work *The Chorus of Begging* and *The Chorus of Giving*, indicates a space for social interaction and thus demonstrates a different order that demands different actions in terms of language, movement, and attitude toward each other. It's a social choreography: when the choirs rehearsed and sung together a political form emerged. My hope is to make visible a space for action between the begging and the giving that can be used for continued ethical negotiations and new staged works.

Key words: fine arts, images, begging, giving, beggar, giver, successful, solidarity, empathy, affect, space of action, free movement, borders, politics of waiting, gestures, urban life, participating art, filminstallation, asymmetry, symmetry, place, house, co-presence, framing, social choreography, power, activate the image, ethics, aesthetics, ethics, video documentation, artistic research, phronesis, Hannah Arendt, Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, Sven-Eric Liedman.

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1.1 The First Encounter

1.

It is late 2010. For some months now I've passed a number of people during my daily rounds, they're kneeling or walking jerkily holding plastic cups. They ask for money and speak languages I don't understand. Something new is happening on the city streets.

One day I see a man who is standing, shaking, he's leaning on a cane and holding out a cup with his other hand. For a while I stand at a distance, looking at him. The situation is complex and confusing, I become emotional. When I approach him to speak to him, my body language doesn't project friendliness and mutuality – reasonable conditions for a dialogue – and I know all this in that moment, it is my job to know it. I also realize that I am about to take leave of several of my founding ethical principles, the stance that I have worked toward during my twenty years of artistic practice, but right now I am ruled by adrenaline, my heart is pounding. I step up to the man, iPhone in hand, and film him, while I ask in Swedish if he needs help. He doesn't understand. I then ask

again in English, then in Spanish. No, he needs money, he tells me in Italian. He extends a large cross that he is wearing on a chain around his neck. This doesn't compute for me; what does the cross have to do with his situation, why is he begging,

can't he go to social services? I ask why he isn't working, if he is sick, if he needs care. "Do you want me to take you to a hospital?", I insist, but he doesn't understand and says that he has several children that need food. He says he came by bus from Romania. You came by bus, oh, so you're a tourist? I say. He looks at me uncomprehendingly and the conversation is over. "Please, no television," he says. No, I won't show this, I tell him, and mean it, trembling.

What happened here? I'm ashamed of my actions and of not being able to control my reactions in relation to a larger picture, in relation to some kind of social and political matrix.¹⁾

2.

Later, as I watch the video snippet, I want to destroy it, erase it, erase my embarrassing incompetence, but I stubbornly hold on to it as a document of how my own reaction – my unconscious bodily action – ruled me in relation to that man. There is an authenticity in these images that I can't recreate, in how I encounter, how I see, how I relate to his space.²⁾ He became instrumental to my image and I became partially blind. What didn't I see and what did I see. And what did I see when I *didn't see*?

A memory: I am little and want to grab the hair that is hanging in front of me, it's tempting because there is so much of it. But I can't grab it precisely because there is so much of it. And when I pull the hair it has consequences, my desire is the other's pain.

My action reveals me to myself and to my surroundings. If I want to see you I also need to see myself and it seems the unconscious in that action can teach me to see. I didn't think for myself, I let preconceived notions override my agency. Now, at least, I have the opportunity to reflect on my failure, without failure, no ethics, as Simone de Beauvoir once said. If I were to neglect reflecting over what just happened I would be submitting to what the Norwegian philosopher Jakob Meloe describes as the *dead gaze*, which doesn't see and doesn't comprehend.³⁾ I've often noticed that those who pass the people

who beg appear to ignore them completely. The person who begs makes a request, addresses the passer-by, but gets no answer. How often is this type of seemingly

selective perception rooted in a conscious decision? In the encounter that I describe as my first I felt a dissatisfaction pertaining to what Meloe calls *the ignorant gaze*; when someone sees and doesn't understand and also understands that she doesn't understand. Among other things it was this limit of understanding that I wanted to approach when I walked up to the man, but first I must, without knowing how, try to tap into my ignorance, challenge a boundary. I want to arrive at what Meloe terms *the knowing gaze*, which sees and understands that the experience is a learning process. In addition I have the option of using my knowledge as a visual artist to explore what other images might be created. For me it isn't enough to depict an experience. I also want to transform an event into an experience, that way I might stand a chance of seeing old insights in a new light, maybe even nudge the boundaries of language somewhat. In one of her graduate seminars Ingela Josefsson, professor of Working Life studies, claims that *experiences without reflection are just events without meaning*.⁴⁾ This is the dilemma in which I decide to engage my gaze. A few weeks later I begin a creative project titled: *How Do You Become a Successful Beggar in Sweden?* I want to explore the choreographies of begging and giving and will continue do so until 2016.

1.2 Notes on the Text

Along with six staged works this text constitutes my thesis.⁵⁾ My artistic work is physical,

spatial, and temporal, and these parameters also affect the presentation. The thesis includes and discusses all these forms of art and presentation. This presentation uses the same approach as the staged works shown in art spaces, at street screenings, or as photo manifestations on social media, it was developed with the intention that text and other renditions of this work should be regarded as a whole.

My first encounter – or rather non-encounter – with a person who was begging prompted me to embark on a five-year exploration of what happens between the begging and the giving on the streets of Sweden; I pose questions about the images at play in the social choreography of begging and giving – how can images be activated in this context and new ones generated? I explore begging and giving in the urban landscape, in the media, and in other activities that stem from these actions. I use images as my starting point; images of action and images that implicate, images that are set in motion, images that generate motion (moving images) and the reverse: new movements generate new images. For each work, I've described the concrete work process and what the negotiations with those involved have been. The text fragments that appear here and there are my “internal negotiations” and of importance to the work.


I discuss the practice of other artists in a number of reflective and analytic texts.⁶⁾ These artists work both within and outside of art as an institution. Their – and my – work has in common that it is dependent on the people involved in the social situation discussed in its staging. A form of *participatory performance* is involved in the production process one way or another – and aims to generate images to be presented to an audience.⁷⁾ “Performance implicates the real through the presence of living bodies”,⁸⁾ as performance theorist Peggy Phelan puts it. She adds: “Performance clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital.”⁹⁾ In her text Phelan uses photographer Cindy Sherman's self-portrait as an example of performance. Cindy Sherman's photographs describe a female body – her own – but she doesn't reproduce the reference. She is an actor who executes a performance in front of the camera (in different ways and with various “additions”)¹⁰⁾. The performance she has staged for the production of the photograph is unique, it hasn't been documented, rather it generates a new image. Sherman's photographs destabilize the relationship between the symbol, the representation, and the female body and thus the reproductive representation. Her photographs participate in – but also clog – the smooth machinery necessary to the circulation of capital.¹¹⁾ The way I read Phelan what she means by reproduction is to *reproduce an image that I have of somebody else or something else*, that is when I reproduce the image I have of you – it is a kind of objectification. But performance demands that these images be reformulated and doing so

necessitates a sensual physicality. It's often difficult to discern reproduction from representation, it is exactly this balancing act that takes place in cooperation with the participants: *to no longer reproduce an image I have of you, but to try to reformulate – and arrive at a new image*. I describe it as the performative process, *activating images and generating new ones*. There is no general method for how to go about this. Every work that I have produced over the course of this thesis has its own process, and taken together these variations can be seen as a method (guided by the research questions) within the framework that the study of the subject constitutes.

The works of all artists in the thesis are ethically challenging and aim to reveal and activate various social gaps as spaces for political action; some of these can – in terms of their staging – be termed *delegated performances* to use the terminology of art historian Claire Bishop.¹²⁾ But this term alone is not enough to encompass the *methodological intent* that I claim characterizes my work and that of the previously mentioned artists. The philosopher Boris Groys maintains that this is a new phenomenon in comparison to other movements in history and names this type of art by naming the intention of the actors: “Art activists react to the increasing collapse of the modern social state [...] Art activists do want to be useful, to change the world, to make the world a better place – but at the same time, they do not want to cease being artists.”¹³⁾ They are forged in the relationship between the ethical, the aesthetic, and the political. Thus they create points of contact with theoretical fields relevant to the work such as political philosophy, sociology, cultural geography, the history of ideas, and anthropology.

There are two whole chapters on the image. The ideas that have become important in the artistic practice are the same as those that guided the theoretical framework. When I examine an image in practice it's about the relationship between viewing and participating – about which position I inhabit in the creative process and the relationship between imagining and producing an image. Which is to say that I don't examine image as production medium (in this thesis). Rather, I use specific designations when describing specific techniques, for instance photo, film, painting, film installation. I use the word “image”, both in the sense of imagining something without physically standing in front of it, that is an image that belongs to the thought and thinking; as well as in the sense that images are actions, that what one sees is experienced as a response and perhaps also as a responsibility – something that needs to be revealed and transmitted to a viewer. Philosopher Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition* has guided me in understanding how actions and thoughts occur as two-way communication; thought demands action and concrete experiences demand the abstraction that thought can supply.

In chapters **3** and **8** – **Places I** and **Places II** – I have photographed places (or non-places) that those who beg have set up on the street. Together they transmit images of a gap between representation and presence.

In chapter 4 I explore gestures in collaboration with different people in different cities; their images are made physical and become performative in the photo demonstration *Body on Street*. The participants' individual experiences – images that they have – of the situation of giving in relation to begging are our points of departure. We explore the boundaries between the personal and social experience and also what capacity (influence) these images can have as physical movement on patterns of movement in the urban landscape. When Barbara Bolt claims that “The performative act doesn't describe something but rather it does something in the world,”¹⁴⁾ she is saying that a performative act is about power and effect that can affect both the participant and the audience.¹⁵⁾ In the urban space, in front of onlookers passing by, still and relational acts are improvised, new images are generated – photographs that frame the movements in the urban environment in which they are enacted are passed on as a photo demonstration on social media and in exhibitions to the audience. This procedure could also be seen as reverse street photography.¹⁶⁾ The work is the entire chain of events.¹⁷⁾ 

Since my studies for the most part have been clearly situated in time and space and developed in relation to the public debate, my investigations have also demanded a public space. Over the course of the project I've kept a project blog – tiggerisomyrke.se [beggingasaprofession.eu] – this has led to my being contacted by and participating in radio shows, newspapers, and magazines. For every exhibition there has been a panel with a local politician and representatives of a local aid organization. In this way I've let the debate on begging and giving in Sweden influence my investigation and I, in turn, have influenced the debate. I discuss this in further detail in chapter 5. But the dissertation isn't just about explaining a course of events, rather I mention this to emphasize that I have worked within a certain time period and within a certain framework. Judith Butler's discussions of *framing* have been important in terms of trying to make this frame visible to some extent. Sara Ahmed is one of those who researches the meaning of emotion in the space between people and her texts have been crucial to gaining a closer understanding of the drama that is triggered on the street between those who beg and those who give, the public debate, as well as the ways in which politicians have reacted to the phenomenon. She also writes about methods for perceiving inter-human space, especially in situations in which there is a palpable inequity or hierarchy.

Chapter 6 deals with the drawing of boundaries that are noticeable in various ways; social points of contact are sensual, that is where the political is founded: In people's affectivities and reactions. And if a physical wall is manifested as an aesthetics of loss – and experienced as an abyss – then where can the knowledge be found? How can one think around, past, over, under the wall about what learning is? Throughout I use philosopher Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback's thought “In

order to develop a phenomenology of appearance it becomes necessary to investigate what visibility means, and thus critically challenge the difference between words and images as a difference between knowledge representation and knowledge production through images.”¹⁸⁾ But I won't try to account for the difference between pictorial notions and conceptual knowledge. This relationship has a problematic history that lies outside my field of inquiry.¹⁹⁾ Nor am I bound to this line of thinking. At times I also find inspiration in a method that is similar to that of musician Eva Dahlgren: “I've always written songs in images.”²⁰⁾ She means that she writes text *in* images, and continues, “I had an image in my head of something that was straight and crispy, the colors were kind of cold and all of that.” That becomes text, set to music, that she later sings at her shows.

Chapters 7.1 and 7.2 consist of *The Chorus of Begging* and *The Chorus of Giving*. *The Chorus of Begging* is made up of people who beg on the streets and *The Chorus of Giving* is made up of people who give to people begging on the streets. The installation with the improvised singing by the filmed choirs is shown to viewers who stand between the projections of the choirs – in the manner they were filmed. The production of this artistic work can be described in the words of Claire Bishop: “A third strand of delegated performance comprises situations constructed for video and film. [...] Recorded images are crucial here since this type frequently captures situations that are too difficult or sensitive to be repeated.”²¹⁾ For three days the 24 members of the choirs were put through a specific form of choral training in order to improvise song without words or music. In Bishop's words they are “[...] works where the artist devises the entire situation being filmed, and where the participants are asked to perform themselves.”²²⁾

Chapter 7.1 is about preparations, process, treatment of images, and a first presentation consisting of an outdoor installation in a shipping container. To me it felt important to convey the images that had been negotiated, experienced, and renegotiated in a closed room for three days. This is why we made a process film: *On the Production of The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving*.²³⁾ This film is shown in conjunction with the installation. I also screen it when I give talks in educational, as well as social, and political contexts.²⁴⁾ With the help of this film I can give an account of our unique collaboration and experimental method, so far it's been screened at five solo exhibitions in Sweden during a time at which the discussions about begging and giving have been intense.

In chapter 7.2 I discuss symmetry and asymmetry in the *The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving* using the works of Butler and Lévinas.

The viewer (as well as the reader) of this thesis misses out on the effect of the sensual experience of physically standing between the projected choruses at a scale of one to one, in the installation.²⁵⁾ Instead the thesis depicts a split-screen that I also use to project the work on the walls of buildings and trucks at night, in the urban landscape, as a street screening with audio. This

version relays a somewhat different effect, which I write about. This is also the version that I screen when I lecture in the contexts mentioned above.

I have expectations on the viewer. I want to be able to hand over the images my participants and I have arrived at through improvisation to a viewer and at the same time establish a trust-based relationship with the viewer as recipient.²⁶⁾

In total a couple of hundred begging and giving people have participated in my presentations, one of the key concepts in this context is *co-presence*. I've borrowed this term from cultural geographer Sara Westin who uses it in her doctoral thesis to discuss the movement of people in an urban space. She asserts the importance of urban planning taking into account how urban spaces are populated – the ways in which people's movements define the space. This mindset has complemented the others I've mentioned and has been important to my work with Places I, Places II, and in particular with Places III where the dissertation alights. The latter describes a place in transformation where some people are included in the social structure and others are shut out for various reasons, but continue to live just outside. This is also where my thesis drills down and makes visible a self-organized cluster of artists whose work seems to resist the reproductive capital by giving in a way that doesn't seem to require anything in return, doesn't accumulate, just gives. That kind of giving is different than helping. The dissertation ends with the opening of an investigation in *A Place in Europe*, where the research questions can be put into play in new ways.



“Beware of taking the unfruitful stance of the SPECTATOR,
Life is no spectacle, a sea of misery no diorama, a crying person no circus bear!”
Photographed at the Modern Museum, Stockholm, 2011. The quote is by Aimé Cesaire.²⁷⁾


1.3 Designations, Images

The title of this thesis is *How Do You Become a Successful Beggar in Sweden?* With it I aim to critically review and challenge a linguistic context, as well as actual phenomena. The title serves as a starting point for discussions and as sort of a verbal engine. The question of how one can succeed is posed by a person in a state of emergency, begging. Or by a person who is expected to be, or is, a potential giver to the person who is begging – how can success be achieved? A gap opens up between those who pose these questions, language doesn't hold. Does this mean that something new might emerge? Is it possible to make one's way outside of the frame of knowledge, outside the hierarchy of power that also controls facts? Perhaps. In any case this is the way in which I attempt to find a point of entry into the questions that are being discussed in the media and on various political levels parallel to this. It is my intention to show how ruptures, openings, gaps, voids, spaces in which language loses contact with meaning and content, can be conveyed, visualized, embodied, and fashioned. Art is one way of doing this.

When I began my project in 2011 the media used the single designation “beggars” for people who beg on the streets. Initially I chose to embrace this problem of definition and regard beggar as an *open concept*.²⁸⁾ To solidify a definition would be to risk alienating, rather than problematizing an effect of poverty, or otherness, that stems from social inequality. I reasoned that if the definitions of beggar and begging respectively remain open, there is no particular group of people to be defined and named. My hope was that a necessary discussion about what begging is would subsequently arise.²⁹⁾

“Success” is a very mediagenic word. The desire to be successful could apply to every line of work, but when I pose the question in relation to someone who has to beg language seems to crack. A disabled man in Bucharest who apparently (begging is forbidden in Romania) is permitted to beg, since he is sitting across the street from police headquarters when we interview him, says to me, “If you can accept that you won’t get more than the minimum needed to survive, then it’s successful. It depends on what your limits are. For me, if I can survive, then it’s successful.”³⁰⁾ Those who beg are at the bottom of the social hierarchy, they are the poorest, and often do not have birth certificates or passports and thus aren’t part of any formal community. The image of success – an improved future situation – is transmitted by the prevailing system, which has created free movement. By having the question about success remain, I hope that the dissertation will also convey the shifts in terminology over the five years that my research has been conducted.

Over the years a number of designations have been used by Swedish media for people who beg: *The beggars, the people who beg, EU-migrants, Roma who beg, the Roma from Romania, the Romani EU-migrants, the EU-mobile, the vulnerable EEA-citizens, The EU-citizens who have the least resources and thus beg.*³¹⁾

When terms such as *EU-migrants* or *poor EU-migrants* are used, begging is connected to migration and migrants. “To describe someone as an EU-citizen, rather than as a migrant, or migrant worker, signals that the person in question has rights that the state is bound to honor, while migrants have the rights that the state chooses to give them.” So writes political scientist Meriam Chatty. She claims that the term “migrant” isn’t neutral, rather it is normatively charged with a content relating to safety. “While the citizen is the person who is protected, the migrant is the one who poses a potential threat.”³²⁾ 

The authors of “The EU-Migrant Debate as Ideology” write that they use the term *EU-migrant* “to describe the groups of vulnerable EU-citizens who make a living for themselves and their families by begging in Sweden,” though they add that they use that term for lack of better, generally accepted alternatives and because they are discussing precisely the configuration of the debate itself.³³⁾ Designations create or shore up underlying values. By using given designations I involve myself more actively in the hegemonic structure that I’m already unconsciously involved in. This also makes it clearer how the language of hegemony speaks through me. For instance using the term *the Roma who beg* can isolate those who beg to one ethnic group and have consequences that have the opposite effect than what the person using the term intended. *The EU-mobile* is another term that came into use in 2013 among critics of the designations of migrants. Another designation is *guest-beggars* (similar to guest-workers), used since more than 90 percent are only here for shorter

periods, for reasons that are nearly exclusively financial. Leif Eriksson, researcher of global studies, writes: “Is this about citizenship, i.e. the status as Swedish citizen, or is it more about ‘cizenry’, i.e. some manner of active participation in community life. What does it mean in practice that also poor, vulnerable EU-migrants are EU-citizens? [...] In practice these and other categorizations determine which rights one is granted.”³⁴⁾

Reasonably the political situation demands that the begging and giving happening on the streets be discussed, but it also leaves open the question: Where does the political begin and end? The authors of “The EU-Migrant Debate as Ideology” begin their reasoning with “Societies are more than an assembly of bodies, linked in mutual dependencies. They are also cultural systems,”³⁵⁾ thus they are letting us know, both what the point of departure must be and how complex the political situation is.


Over the course of the conversations I’ve had since 2011 with both those who give money and those who ask for money on the streets, a broad spectrum of various life conditions has emerged. Many different people beg. They don’t just come from the EU, there are also people from extra-European countries who come to Sweden and beg.

If the act of *begging* is what defines “beggars” the next question must be: What is the difference between begging and asking for help?³⁶⁾ And if begging is an act of necessity, is the related act – giving – an act of charity? I maintain that begging can’t be discussed without also discussing giving – the images that are put into play with these actions are images that are generated within the same framework and are dependent on each other. This is why I have framed begging and giving as acts, looked at them as actions within a system and at what images these actions generate, even if who performs these actions obviously matters too.³⁷⁾ One way or another everyone tries to create a strategy to manage their existence. People network and organize, that is one way of managing living together. That is one way of answering to a social system. “Begging” can be seen as such a response. In the self-organized civil society – the mobilization that has taken place in response to the situation of those who beg – “giving” is one response. Both acts reveal agency as well as deficiencies in a system. That is why I mainly use designations that pertain to the acts themselves – except in a few cases where some other term is relevant to the situation – “giving” in relation to “begging”.

1.4 Research Questions

How can one make visible the new situation regarding the begging and the giving? The number of articles about “beggars” increased seventeen-fold during the more than five years I worked on this subject. This bears witness to an increase in the number of people begging – from about a thousand people in 2011 to about five thousand in 2015 – but also to a need for expression in the general public. The social climate is changing and this can be seen and felt.³⁸⁾ The visibility of those who beg has been given as a reason for why their presence is so frequently discussed and for the drama it causes, but their visibility also makes me visible – as I write above in “The First Encounter”: *The act reveals me to myself as well as to my surroundings* – the actions of both fall outside of the social contract. Images are made out of acts and images in turn create actions. What has happened and is happening between two people on the street – the giving and the begging – shreds a social self-image, at least for those who give, How are images – and physical action – in turn connected to social image and body politic?

Regardless of whether those who give and those who beg interact with each other, if they are in contact or not in contact at all, most seem to have stories about and images of one another, and of what the other is like. My curiosity and my investigation is based on my own first encounter during which I realized that I didn’t even attempt to see – that I could see more together with others. Was my dead gaze an effect of some collective influence – how do “we” regard begging as an activity, how do we regard the beggar, and who are “we”? My initial research questions were: *What images does the giving face?* And I began to ask people who give. Parallel to this I posed the question: *What images does the begging face?* I asked people who beg. In part I wanted to know which *given images* were in circulation, in part I wanted to try to understand something about the motivations, ideas, affectivities, feelings, thoughts, and values that shaped these images. This resulted in two films that are presented as an installation where the viewer (the potential giver) sits in between, in the space or leeway where the follow-up

question becomes: *Which images are at play between those who give and those who beg?* My first two research questions are posed in the work to the viewer, and subsequently returned to me – the researcher – who can then reflect, analyze and pose the next question. The next question is about *using various practices to investigate how these “images”, collective, as well as individual, visual as well as linguistic – are put into play in society.* Revealing images in this way is a performative act. 

As a giver I have linguistic privilege. Power is about a meeting of different forces and is built on an interplay, even if begging and giving necessitate one another, even if there is a negotiation about what is given in the transaction; however the gift is given and received, it isn't a “free exchange”, or an “encounter”, it is deeply shaped by class, gender, culture, and other hierarchies of power. What is in the power of the person who begs? What is in my power? These are questions that deal with will, responsibility, action, but also impotence, powerlessness, and limitation.³⁹⁾

My next step was to investigate the premises for a giver to create space for agency and I do this in the work *Body on Street*. Here I don't involve those who beg. It's an investigation done in cooperation with other givers into how the situation is embodied in different social bodies. In other words: How can one's subjective images of a situation involving a person who begs manifest in the body and in the street? And how can these images “manifest socially” on streets and in public squares? To date the work *Body on Street* has been improvised in eight different cities. It is a photographic demonstration intended to generate new images.

I have followed phenomenologist Sara Ahmed's theories of the other. She describes how emotions are created between, bind, and connect bodies. She reveals to me how this dynamic space is a space for action. My next question then becomes: How can one portray this space of action that exists between the person who begs and the person who gives? It is portrayed in the dialogue-based choral arrangement with twenty-four participants. If a mutual action is staged – something which none of those begging or giving have previously done in this manner – can new images be conveyed between the participants? Can they be conveyed to the viewer who once again gets to inhabit the “in between” – the space between the two choirs?


1.5 Methodological Stance and Intent

1.

Apart from the study of the specific subject at hand, my research project is my artistic method and practice. As Mara Lee puts it in her dissertation on literary portrayal: “So far there are few methods within artistic research regarded as generally valid and shareable. It is hard to find a set of methodological rules that can be used by many. Our methods usually stem from and are rooted in our artistic practice, and thus the element of style becomes part of the method.”⁴⁰⁾ I have worked with methodological intent.

Throughout this entire project I activate my research questions together with other people. Often “the beggar” is referred to as if they are the carrier of “the problem” and thus also require a personified or collective solution, something the authors of the article “The EU-Migrant Debate as Ideology” are also critical of: “Rather the EU migrant appears as ‘a figure who embodies a life beyond the disciplined bodies of the well-behaved workers’. This figure is intimidating in the eyes of the ‘rule of law’ since it cannot be isolated from the ethnic group.”⁴¹⁾ The authors maintain that the images ascribed to those who beg are the result of a prevailing economic structure, which must also be problematized, and they stress the importance of renegotiating and “to establish conditions for EU migrants to come forth as political subjects that social majorities not only speak about but, in the end, speak to.”⁴²⁾ How then, in practice, does one speak *to*? This is what the thesis as a whole aims to investigate, using my first encounter above as a point of departure. This is also what the research questions aim to investigate. I’ve been guided by my experience as a documentary filmmaker, action researcher, and with other field study over the years, in terms of what speaking and listening *to* might look like in concrete situations. The works that this text describes and which are shown on this website intend to further illuminate this practice within the discipline of fine art.

When the artistic work is done in concert with other people every situation involving another person is unique and necessitates its own negotiations over *the image*, over the ethical in

the aesthetic presentation that is being created. To *want* to speak through images does not mean that it is doable, it often fails due to the questions being asked not being formulated in relation to the one who is expected to answer, they aren't heard or understood, or aren't relevant to the person being addressed. *Space* is vital for both parties and the process of negotiation can't be too controlled, but still needs to have a certain direction. To speak to is a mutual process. This is why I think it necessary to go into this project with a methodological intent and to develop the method *together with*. To use art historian Claire Bishop's description, I am "less interested in a relational aesthetic than in the creative rewards of participation as a politicized working process."⁴³⁾ This includes an investigation of the aesthetic. Nor do I assume a specific method of image creation in this context, rather I begin by making visible and shaping the research questions. 





In my work I make use of concrete situations as well as experiences of encounters that then become tools to create a portrayal. "Practical knowledge, *phronēsis*, is a another kind of knowledge. Primarily, this means that it is directed towards the concrete situation. Thus it must grasp the 'circumstances' in their infinite variety."⁴⁴⁾ So writes the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer.⁴⁵⁾ *Phronēsis* here means knowledge in which individual cases – situations – are judged in relation to context. A number of ethical and epistemological problems converge in field study of "strangers", people from other cultural contexts or positions of power.⁴⁶⁾ And yet another question might be formulated against the backdrop of all of this: *How can the images of those who beg and those who give be problematized in order to generate new images – in such a way that image makers or mediators also have to look at themselves, their knowledge, their complicity?* This question also brings one face to face with the frame within which the production of knowledge takes place. My methodological intent contains elements of unlearning, as well as the generation of new images. The individual encounter may be unique, particular, but can also be seen as part of a larger pattern. In this sense my own shortcomings also constitute an important basis of experience. Thus the artistic practice involves a constant labor of destruction, in part because the destruction of *given images* (prevailing normative images) is connected to the possibility of creating new ones, in part because the intention is to try to move outside of a given framework. My intent is also to use works of art to create points of contact with other disciplines, in practice and in theory. A project such as this isn't possible without examining one's own power structure, the one I am part of. This may be the most difficult aspect. Even with the best intentions a presentation can't escape also being a representation of the participants as "those who beg and those who give", but in this process, as well as in different forms of presentations, I have attempted to open up spaces for participants and viewers to reflect and participate. In the practical procedure I also try to separate my subjective intentions by investigating and portraying.

2.

Every form of portrayal has its own process, method and model. The following is a frame for various working processes and it has four corners.




1. *A way of destroying*⁴⁷⁾ – the image of the image; that is the imagined image (ways of seeing as part of a prevailing, normative image, the image belonging to the culture). This is about self-reflection and revealing oneself as a bearer of dominant norms and working through these images. To paint (or in a different execution: text, photo, performance); a self-portrait – a self-image as a revelation of me as the person who sees and depicts in order to declare a certain position.⁴⁸⁾ The destruction takes place during the time it takes to understand and can involve a personal reckoning with a past, to see old insights in a new light.⁴⁹⁾
2. *A will to see* – to reach, listen with all senses, reflect, translate. To set up encounters and find out what opens up. To seek contact – a mutual desire to see and be seen. The quest for horizontality, there is a de-objectification in the process of speaking *to*. Reflecting over an aesthetics of distance and an aesthetics of proximity. Zooming out and seeing larger contexts, power structures, frameworks – *framing*.⁵⁰⁾
3. *A movement inward and outward* – images relate to each other in some way, the image can never be entirely new, since I can never leave or stand outside of the frame. But the images can be challenged in order to process them: *to un-frame the framed*. In part this also means a failure at seeing, understanding, and changing. In the contact that is sought with the participants lie the questions: how (ethics) and for what (aesthetics)? By suggesting meaning, re-evaluation, de-/re-interpretation the blindness to the frame may engage listening.
4. *An attempt to change* – to differentiate and create a space for action. How do one's own gestures relate to the gestures of the body politic? Which are the questions I want to pose, and does the work succeed in posing them and opening them up for the artist and the viewer? *To frame the unframed space*, may be the role of the artist. *To un-frame the framed*, and then activate the space, may be the role of the audience.

Chapter 1: Introduction Notes

1.  Sara Ahmed, professor of race and cultural studies, describes how shame can be experienced in a variety of ways: “Shame can also be experienced as the affective cost of not following the scripts of normative existence.”
Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, second edition, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 107.
2.  Philosopher Luce Irigaray describes the necessity of air space in an encounter as follows: “Air that which brings us together and separates us. Which unites us and leaves a space for us between us. In which we love each other but which also belongs to the earth. Which at times we share in a few inspired words. Air, which gives us forms from within and from without and in which I can give you forms if the words I address to you are truly destined for you and are still the oeuvre of my flesh.” Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 148.
3.  This account of philosopher Jakob Meloe’s theory is borrowed from a lecture by Professor Ingela Josefsson in a postgraduate course in epistemology at STDH, Stockholm University, September 21, 2011–February 6, 2012.
4.  Ingela Josefsson, doctor of Scandinavian languages, was the vice-chancellor of Södertörn University until June 2010 and is Professor of Working Life studies at the Center for Studies in Practical Knowledge at Södertörn University. Among other things she maintains the importance of tacit knowledge or practical knowledge and says in an interview that she noticed that: “A gap has formed between what one could call academic praxis and the praxis in practice.” Practice-based knowledge is a term developed in the Anglo-Saxon world for praxis-based research but Ingela Josefsson and others choose the Swedish term *praktisk*

kunskap, which they translate as practical knowledge in English (rather than the term tacit knowledge which was used initially). It aims to be professional or working life knowledge. Though the terms may seem synonymous, these are separate discourses. Markus Prest, “Teorin måste utformas på praktikens villkor”, *Ikaros* 3.10 (2010). Accessed May 9, 2016, www.fbf.fi/ikaros/arkiv/2010-3/310_prest2.pdf.

During the same Ph.D. seminar Josefsson refers to Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim who writes: “Engagement is a foundation of human existence, it has to do with what Heidegger calls *Geworfenheit* (thrown-ness). What we can choose is what we want to engage in, or we can let others choose for us.” Hans Skjervheim, Ian Hamilton, and Lillemor Lagerlöf, *Deltagare och åskådare. Sex bidrag till debatten om människans frihet i det moderna samhället*, (Stockholm: Prisma/Verdandi, 1971), 21.

5.  All works are shown together in a travelling exhibition: At Skövde Konsthall, Varbergs Konsthall, and Skellefteå Konsthall 2015–17. There have also been a number of exhibitions and street screenings of individual staged works. In connection with the dissertation there will be an opportunity to see the works at Skellefteå Konsthall, starting October 30, 2016, which is one of several exhibition windows for the material in the thesis.
6.  All fall under the umbrella term participatory art. They are: A documentary participatory-performative film, *Enjoy Poverty* by Renzo Martens, a documentary participatory-performative film installation, *Kropp – Erfarenhet – Kunskap* [Body-Experience-Knowledge] by Ioana Cojocariu, a public space-performance, *Persondesign*, by artistic duo Bogdan Szyber & Carina Reich, a participatory-public-installation, *Lights in the City* by Alfredo Jaar, and a site-specific action painting and cutting by AKAY & KlisterPeter. I use these terms to show how contemporary art uses and compiles various practices and methodologies.
7.  Performance is an art form that can be part of works in various ways. Stimulated by my colleagues I investigate possibilities in practice, and have done so since the early 1990s. My background was in painting during the 1980s. I was active in video art in the 1990s, in the tradition that involves a performance in front of the camera in a closed room, alone or with a participant, which is then screened as an art installation. My practice later transitioned to participatory performative staged works and action documentary (www.ceciliaparsberg.com). Since the turn of the millennium I’ve worked with participation in different forms, some of these can be designated variations of *delegated performances*, which is a term used by Claire Bishop. But these also differ from each other, see further discussion in the text. This thesis work contains the staged works *What Images does the Giving face? & What Images does the Begging face?*, [chapter 2](#), *Body on Street*, [chapter 4](#), and *The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving*, [chapter 7](#), where performance forms a foundation for my work. In these participatory performances I am the employer, I pay all participants and everybody knows that this will become a film for an art installation. I am describing art movements and –isms so that we know that we mean the same thing while talking, but it is not within the scope of my thesis to analyze them. Much like the term “art” I use “performance” as an open term.

The meaning of performance in relation to *performative* acts is analyzed by, among others, artist and art theorist Barbara Bolt, she refers to philosopher of language John Langshaw Austin, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida and others.

Barbara Bolt, “Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm?” *PARSE* 3, (2016). An older and shorter version can be found online: “A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts?” accessed May 9, 2016,

www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/12417/WPIAAD_vol5_bolt.pdf.

8. ☞ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The politics of performance*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 148.

9. ☞ *Ibid.*, 148.

Phelan positions the constative (self-referential acts of speech – findings) in contradiction to the metonymic: “Metonymy is additive and associative; it works to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement.” (*Ibid.*, 215). She also maintains that the performative displays independence from an external reference in present actions.

10. ☞ “Just as her body remains unseen as ‘in itself it really is,’ so too does the sign fail to reproduce the referent.” (*Ibid.*, 150).

11. ☞ In another example Phelan discusses the works of Sophie Calle, an artist who works with stories and who “is increasingly moving toward performance”, here on a work at the Isabella Gardner Stewart Museum in Boston: “The descriptions fill in, and thus supplement (add to, defer, and displace) the stolen paintings [...] the interaction between the art object and the spectator is, essentially, performative – and therefore resistant to the claims of validity and accuracy endemic to the discourse of reproduction. [...] The description itself does not reproduce the object, it rather helps to restage and restate [...]” (*Ibid.*, 147).

According to my interpretation Phelan is talking about how the absence of objects together with the stories of the vanished objects create images in the viewer, a performative act takes place between art object and viewer that generates new images.





12. ☞ In the mid-1990s a particular kind of performance emerged, described here by Claire Bishop: “Although this trend takes a number of forms, [...] all of this work [...] maintains a comfortable relationship to the gallery, taking it either as the frame for a performance or as a space of exhibition for the photographic and video artefact that results from this. I will refer to this tendency as ‘delegated performance’: the act of hiring non-professionals or specialists in other fields to undertake the job of being present and performing at a particular time and a particular place on behalf of the artist, and following his/her instructions.” Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, (New York: Verso, 2012), 222.

One example is the work of Santiago Sierra, in which he hires workers to complete simple tasks in the exhibition space during the time of the exhibition, such as hold up a wall that’s about to fall, or part of a wall. His performance alludes to the socio-economic system. “Although the artist delegates power to the performer (entrusting them with agency while also affirming hierarchy), delegation is not just a one-way, downward gesture. In turn, the

performers also delegate something to the artist: a guarantee of authenticity, through their proximity to everyday social reality, conventionally denied to the artist who deals merely in representations.” (Bishop, 237). Bishop addresses a number of variations on delegated performance and discusses these in [chapter 8](#).

The works by Ioana Cojocariu and Szyber & Reich that I mentioned can be termed ‘delegated performances’ according to Bishop’s definition, as can my works *What Images does the Giving face?* & *What Images does the Begging face?* and *The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving*.

The ways in which the performance of the 1990s differs from that of the 1960s and ’70s is also interesting in this context, and as Claire Bishop puts it: “Artists in the 1970s used their own bodies as the medium and material of the work, often with a corresponding emphasis on physical and psychological transgression. Today’s delegated performance still places a high value upon immediacy, but if it has any transgressive character, this tends to derive from the perception that artists are exhibiting and exploiting other subjects.” (Bishop, 223). The examples of staged works that are addressed in the thesis also exist within and aim to discuss this kind of drawing of ethical and aesthetic boundaries.

13.  Relational Art is a tendency in contemporary art that art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud highlights with his book *Relational Aesthetics*, (Dijon: Les Presses Du Reel, 1998), and that has influenced my artistic practice, But with my engagement in social and policy issues my practice is closer to what Boris Groys describes: “The phenomenon of art activism is central to our time because it is a new phenomenon – quite different from the phenomenon of critical art that became familiar to us during recent decades. Art activists do not want to merely criticize the art system or the general political and social conditions under which this system functions. Rather, they want to change these conditions by means of art – not so much inside the art system but outside it, in reality itself.”
Boris Groys, “On Art Activism”, *E-flux journal*, 56, (2014): 1. Accessed April 30, 2016, www.e-flux.com/journal/on-art-activism.
14.  Barbara Bolt, “Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm?”.
15.  “The essay argues that the performative needs to be understood in terms of the performative *force* of art, that is, its capacity to effect ‘movement’ in thought, word and deed in the individual and social sensorium.” (Barbara Bolt, “Artistic Research: A Performative Paradigm?”, 134.)
16.  “The street photographer can be seen as an extension of the flaneur an observer of the streets (who was often a writer or artist)”. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (London: Penguin, 2008), 55.

Street photography is “conducted for art or enquiry that features unmediated chance encounters and random incidents within public places. [...] Street photography can focus on people and their behavior in public.” “Street Photography”, Wikipedia. Accessed May 14,

2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Street_photography.





17. 🖱️ A workshop has been arranged for each exhibition together with participants from that town, the photos that are generated are then displayed in the exhibition space together with the others from the series *Body on Street*.
18. 🖱️ Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, *Att tänka i skisser*, (Gothenburg: Glänta, 2011), 12.
19. 🖱️ Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback explains this relationship in *Att tänka i skisser*. She writes: “The longstanding philosophical dispute between logos and mytos, reason and myth, is primarily a struggle between idea and image, between abstraction and fiction, and thus between two types of distancing from the real.” (Ibid., 7).
20. 🖱️ Anna Bodin, “Jag vill översätta det fantastiska ljuset till musik”, April 17, 2016, *Dagens Nyheter*. Accessed April 26, 2016, www.dn.se/arkiv/dn-kultur/jag-vill-oversatta-det-fantastiska-ljuset-till-musik.
21. 🖱️ “[...] key examples might include Gillian Wearing, Artur Żmijewski and Phil Collins.” (Bishop, 226).
22. 🖱️ “What I am calling delegated performance in all its contemporary iterations (from live installation to constructed situations) brings clear pressures to bear on the conventions of body art as they have been handed down to us from the 1960s.” (Ibid., 226).
23. 🖱️ “On the Production of *The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving*”.
24. 🖱️ As a keynote speaker in connection with FEAD’s announcement of 50 million kronor in grants that the organizations of civil society could apply for, I talked about how we developed the choral arrangement and showed the same split-screen presentation that is shown in the thesis.

“The overall goal for FEAD is that people who are in a socially vulnerable position will gain increased social participation and autonomy. More specifically this is mainly about EU and EEA citizens who stay in Sweden for shorter periods of time.”

“Nationell utlysning: Fead-insatser 2015–2018”. Accessed May 14, 2016, www.esf.se/Documents/Våra%20program/FEAD/Utlysning/Utlysning%20Fead%202015.pdf.

Among other lectures and writing assignments I was also asked to publish an article, mainly about the process of staging the choral arrangement, in *Socialmedicinsk Tidskrift*, “Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri”, Vol. 92, No. 3 (2015). Accessed May 14, 2016, <http://socialmedicinsktidskrift.se/index.php/smt/issue/view/105>.
25. 🖱️ “Contemporary performance art does not necessarily privilege the live moment or the artist’s own body, but instead engages in numerous strategies of mediation that include delegation and repetition; at the same time, it continues to have an investment in immediacy via the presentation of authentic non-professional performers who represent specific social groups.” (Bishop, 226).
26. 🖱️ All participants know from the start that photographs and films will be shown in exhibitions and eventually in the media.

27. 🖱️ Aimé Césaire, 1913–2008, was an author, poet, playwright, and politician from Martinique. He founded the expression Négritude in the journal *L'Étudiant Noir* in 1935 and was active in the Négritude movement, an ideological-literary movement that arose in Paris. The movement was anti-colonial and aimed to replace the white man's disdain for Black people with a revaluation of Black culture and instill pride in Black people about their origins and color. The Négritude movement was a reaction against French politics of assimilation. The goal was to articulate a culture of one's own. Léopold Senghor was the most influential ideologue of the first years of the movement. The Négritude movement was introduced to a broader swath of the white public by Jean-Paul Sartre in his foreword to *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, in 1948.
28. 🖱️ “The distinction between open and closed terms was important in this context. A closed term is a term that can be defined by the traditional ‘if and only if’ definition, that is by giving the necessary and sufficient conditions for something falling under this term. Examples of these types of definitions are mathematical terms as two, three, four, circle, equilateral triangle, and so on. An open term is a term that can't be satisfactorily defined in this manner.” Tore Nordenstam, *Exemplets makt*, (*Dialoger*, 2005), 31.
29. 🖱️ In order to understand ‘open terms’ one needs to know series of cases that fit the pattern, according to philosopher Tore Nordenstam. “These are necessary conditions for the possibility of understanding and action.” (*Ibid.*, 59).
- “Art” is an example of an open term, it's only characterized through the shifting examples that are contained in it. The strength in art is that it shows the weaknesses in the definition process.
- Begging is an open term. Can begging be categorized as an occupation – what counts as begging? Is peddling begging? Is recycling cans begging? How many hours a day does one need to work to count as a beggar? Are buskers beggars? “The law on busking says: According to the municipal assembly circular 1995:41 collecting money in connection to performing street music doesn't necessitate a permit, partly due to the fact that this would limit the individual's freedom to perform a musical or other artistic work, partly due to a musician's collection in an instrument case, or on an article of clothing being a passive act. It is a different thing if the musician is walking around in the audience collecting money. This act is to be seen as collection of money and can necessitate a permit in accordance with local regulations (prop. 1992/93:210 s. 141 f). Exceptions to the need for permits can be made in cases such as school classes collecting money to aid organizations.” Ann Sofi Agnevik and Emilia Danielsson, “Några juridiska frågor gällande utsatta EU-medborgare”, September 12, 2014, *Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting*, 9. Accessed April 26, 2016, www.skl.se/download/18.2371797b14a4dca6483fe13/1418804156789/SKL-juridiska-fragor-om-utsatta-EU-medborgare-2014-12-09.pdf.
30. 🖱️ An interview that was filmed by me with interpreter Laura Chifiriuc in Bucharest, August 2013.

31.  In his investigation on vulnerable EEA citizens in Sweden, national coordinator Martin Valfridsson has described as “vulnerable” those who don’t have the right to access Swedish welfare. The report became official in January 2016. The image of which people are included in this term is complicated by the following description in the introduction to his report: “By vulnerable EU citizens this report means individuals who are citizens of another EU nation and who do not have so-called right of residency in Sweden. Those who don’t have right of residency have significantly lower chances of accessing welfare here. In order to obtain a right of residency, it is in somewhat simplified terms, necessary to have a job or good chances of obtaining a job.” The report gives a very short history of begging in Sweden and especially points to the last three years that in the introduction are described as follows: “In 2012 vulnerable EU citizens began to come to Sweden in larger numbers than before. Some came to beg, others to pick berries, or look for work. Over the next three years their numbers increased considerably. In the spring of 2014 an estimated 2,100 such individuals were present in Sweden. In April 2015 there were 5,000 individuals. Since then the numbers ceased to increase and a minor drop has been recorded. In November 2015 the number was estimated at 4,700 individuals. The number of children in the group varies, but is estimated at between 70 and 100. Martin Valfridsson, “Framtid sökes – Slutredovisning från den nationella samordnaren för utsatta EU-medborgare”, *Statens offentliga utredningar*, (SOU 2016:6), 7. Accessed April 12, 2016, www.regeringen.se/contentassets/b9ca59958b5f43f681b8ec6dba5b5ca3/framtid-sokesslutredovisning-fran-den-nationella-samordnaren-for-utsatta-eu-medborgare-sou-2016_6.pdf.
32.  Meriam Chatty, “Migranternas medborgarskap” (Ph.D. diss., Studies in Political Science, Örebro University, 2015), 40.
33.  They maintain that the debate must concern who has the right to rights and which responsibilities come with the rights that exist within a certain social order.
Hanna Bäckström, Johan Örestig, Erik Persson, “The EU Migrant Debate as Ideology”, *Eurozine*, June 15, (2016), 2. Accessed April 26, 2016, www.eurozine.com/articles/2016-06-15-orestig-en.html.
34.  The passage continues: “Is ‘inhabitants’ a more or less inclusive term than citizens? Is an EU migrant living in an illegal encampment one of the city’s inhabitants? So-called ‘undocumented’ migrants have a legal right to healthcare and schooling. Poor EU citizens aren’t included in the term ‘undocumented’ migrants and thus aren’t included in the legislation in question. In practice these and other categorizations become defining for which rights one is granted. In 2015 the city of Gothenburg established that the holders of rights are all who ‘live in the city’, but in 2016 it changed this to all ‘inhabitants’. The question of if this means that the circle of holders of rights has been limited has yet to be answered.” Leif Eriksson, *Från elefanten i rummet till kanariefågeln i gruvan – om socialt utsatta EU-migranter i det svenska folkhemmet*, Mistra Urban Futures Report, 2015:04, (School of

Global Studies, University of Gothenburg): 44.

35. ☞ Örestig, Bäckström, Persson, 2.
36. ☞ Agnevik, Danielsson, 9.
37. ☞ Hans Swärd, professor at the School of Social Work at Lund University writes: “If the issue is framed as one of safety and security for citizens in the public space, a reasonable solution might be to turn the beggars away from spaces where many citizens circulate. If the issue is framed as one of dire poverty, a reasonable solution could be to open shelters and soup kitchens to counter cold and hunger. If the issue is framed as a structural problem, a reasonable solution would be to take structural measures to eradicate poverty and discrimination.” “Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri”, *Socialmedicinsk Tidskrift*, Vol. 92, No. 3, 2015: 280. Accessed April 26, 2016
<http://socialmedicinsktidskrift.se/index.php/smt/issue/current>.
38. ☞ I searched the Swedish newspaper database Retriever Research for articles on “beggars” and found that in 2011 there were 470; in 2012: 793; in 2013: 1,836; in 2014: 7,044; and in 2015: 7,699.

The number of articles on “beggars” has multiplied by seventeen in four years. Professor Hans Swärd, who researches poverty, social problems, homelessness, social work and the history of social work, has done a similar investigation: “The number of begging people who’ve come here through free movement is estimated to be 4,000–6,000 people (in all of Sweden) in 2015, compared to about 10,000–30,000 undocumented migrants, and about 34,000 homeless people.” “Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri”, *Socialmedicinsk Tidskrift*, 269.

In regards to the attention media has paid the issue Hans Swärd concludes: “Despite the issue having garnered attention, the level of knowledge is far from comprehensive.” He also writes: “We see the stranger through the eyes of the majority culture and base our assumptions on visible conditions, temporary behaviors, race or physical markers. The physical proximity of the situation to our daily lives along with lack of knowledge has meant heightened drama, which to some extent explains the heightened attention.”

39. ☞ “What I can do means both ‘what is in my power’ and ‘what am I able to do’. How does my power relate to the various forms of power that surround me, that shape me and which I might frequently and without knowing it, be part of, shape, and participate in. What power systems does my power relate to, which types of power systems am I part of, etc.”

From a lecture text that Fredrika Spindler, associate professor of philosophy, wrote for the exhibition “What question would you ask someone who is more powerful than you?” at Rinkeby Folkets hus, as well as a travelling exhibition in Sweden arranged by Riksställningar titled: “4U!”, 2004-5. The text can be found in its entirety at:
www.ceciliaparsberg.se/4u/index_main.html.

40. ☞ Mara Lee, *När andra skriver; skrivande som motstånd, ansvar och tid*, (Gothenburg: Glänta,

- 2014), 26.
41. ☞ Örestig, Bäckström, Persson, 6.
 42. ☞ Ibid., 9.
 43. ☞ Bishop, 2.
 44. ☞ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, (New York: Continuum, 1989), 19.
 45. ☞ Ibid., 19. Here Gadamer refers to the words of Aristotle in a footnote: “Knowing what is good for one is a sort of knowledge.” *Den Nikomachiska etiken, Första boken*, transl. Mårten Ringbom, (Gothenburg: Daidalos, 1993).
 46. ☞ According to a description in the journal *Fronesis* the term *phronēsis* comes “from ancient Greece and indicates a practical form of knowledge. Aristotle differentiated between the technical form of knowledge ‘*technē*’, which was instrumental, the logical form of knowledge ‘*epistēmē*’, that was separate from action, and the virtue of wisdom and reflection, *phronesis*, which was self-motivated. The term *phronesis* expands onto a critical knowledge that makes it possible for us to transgress the arbitrary boundaries of the day for what is politically and intellectually possible.” “Om *Fronesis*”. Accessed April 26, 2016, www.fronesis.nu/om-fronesis.
 47. ☞ Inspired by Louise Bourgeois’ notes in *Deconstruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).
 48. ☞ In this project for instance the short recording of the first encounter is what reveals me. After this, revelations happen for each step of the thesis. Self-reflection that also leads to revelation is perishable. Self-reflection is the trampled track next to the road. The cursive passages in this text are a selection of self-reflections.
 49. ☞ Insights that have been reached in a previous situation are contemplated anew in the next. But they can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from self-images, understandings and old, sanitized images that limit. Insights must also be challenged, as Hans Larsson points out “How infinitely much lies not in a person’s view of themselves? His conscious reflection can hardly include anything but a few traits, a few needs in their most general direction and not the particularity they have and that everything will depend on.” Hans Larsson, *Intuition*, (Stockholm: Dialoger, 1997), 52.
 50. ☞ A friend of mine tells me that her seven-year-old son has brought home two drawings from school. The teacher instructed the children to draw a self-portrait. He paints himself, his mom, and his dad. He shows the drawing but the teacher said – No, you were supposed to paint your self-portrait. He draws another: Himself, his mom, and his dad. A self-portrait is a form of self-image and this boy drew those closest to him as co-creators of his self-image. Perhaps he is saying that his image is a relational process where the image of the other is returned, reflected by the person, or those who look at him. Perhaps the fact that he was adopted from China matters here and hence he has an intuitive understanding of what it means to have a different look – image – than those who surround him. Perhaps drawing

conveys what he can't express to his teacher in words. Perhaps – if the teacher has an authoritarian outlook on teaching as well as image – this boy will eventually begin to draw like the others; a self-portrait like the face I see in the mirror. Because that is, “the right way to draw a self-portrait”. He is schooled in adjusting his way of seeing according to the prevailing consensus on how a self-portrait is drawn. But if the teacher can see outside of his accustomed frame, see what his drawing conveys – listen to the image, be open to learning, it is possible that his self-image can have a place next to the others, in school, in education.

Cecilia
Parsberg

Search:

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Images

2.1 Is This an Image of a Human?

2.2 *What Images does the Giving face? & What Images does the Begging face?*

2.3 On Seeing Images

Notes

Staged Work { What Images does the Giving face? & What Images does the Begging face? }

2.1 Is This an Image of a Human?

1.

What images does the begging person face as they kneel? What images am I facing when I do or don't give to the begging person? How can I, as a professional image-maker, respond to these images?

Elfriede Jelinek writes, "Is this a piece of human that I see? Is this an image of a human? Is this a human from an image? Yes it is a human from

an image. I know this! No I don't.”¹⁾

Who wants to be a human from an image? Does woman want to be a human from man's image, the Swede a human from another nationality's image, the Muslim a human from the Christian's image and vice versa? The beggar does not want to be a human from the successful person's image. But it isn't that simple. The beggar doesn't want to beg at all and the giver doesn't want begging to exist – on this the beggar and the giver agree.





Stockholm, March 8. 2013.

2.

We share an existence on the streets but we're separated by a chasm – we don't share it. How do I see the begging person? I ask a friend to take photos of me giving to begging people while we walk around central Stockholm for a day. I want to know what I look like; my attitude should be visible in my behavior, in the figure of my body. I also wonder what our figures look like in relation to each other.

A kneeling body in front of me, I can't see his face, I see two hands, pressed together. His body says: I am begging. His hat on the ground says: I am begging you to give me money. My hand searches my pocket, but there are no coins in it so it stays in there, in the warmth, it's cold today. My other hand finds some coins. I look at the figure below me and find it hard to fix my gaze on his red jacket, the red seems to blur; I try to focus: Red jacket, black hair, head bent. My eyes are hazy. I lean over to give him the coins, trying to see him as a whole figure. I stretch my arm toward his hat, my hand is almost under his head. I lean backward to keep from falling over him. The coin slips through my fingertips, he lifts his head ever so slightly, our eyes meet. We're so close, but we're in different worlds. One of my hands is still in my pocket, warm next to my body. My other arm dangles at my side, not knowing what to do. The man in front of me shifts slightly, back to his position. I wait for an eternity. I back out of the chasm. I notice him looking at my shoes, what is he thinking? What does he feel? Emptiness? Perhaps his stomach is empty; my head is. I keep walking down the street and notice that my eyes are still cloudy. I want to rub my eyes to clear them, but how can I see him clearly if I can't see what we're doing?



Stockholm, March 8. 2013.

2.2 What Images does the Giving face? & What Images does the Begging face?



Two videos shown as an installation in Varbergs Konsthall, Sweden, October 2014–January 2015.

1.

In the summer of 2011 I enlist a professional market researcher who performs a qualitative survey in which givers in Sweden share their views on those who beg and answer questions about how those who beg can become more successful as beggars in Sweden.²⁾ This results in a film. Next I interview begging people who share their views on givers. This too results in a film. These two films are screened across from each other.

2.

What Images does the Giving face? This is the title of the first film (above left).

In my first encounter with the begging person I took their photo and broke my own honor code of not *taking* photos. I want to get images when I photograph, or at the very least be given them in some kind of transaction. In terms of mutual respect, I violated both my boundary and that of the other person. This prompted my investigation of my own position, my view of the person begging. I figured that if I saw them this way, perhaps others did too.

In consultation with the market researcher we decide that in order for the participants to talk about their feelings and reactions to begging, as well as to define what begging is, it's necessary to have a number of photographs showing people begging. I find a few photos online, but it's not enough. I need to go out on the streets and photograph.

The interaction with each person I photograph is unique, how our eyes meet, how I approach them, how I show them the camera, how I give money, how I ask for a photo. Often some kind of negotiation between us starts from a distance, across the urban space, with our respective body languages and gazes. Then, after just a few days and upward of 30 encounters I realize I don't want to keep photographing them. I don't feel comfortable no matter what I do. At each encounter I ask myself why I am about to photograph this person. I ask for a picture and I put something in their outstretched palm, it's a decent negotiation, that's not the problem.

An outstretched palm wants something. It can be read as an open question, not just to the giver, or to the person who passes the person begging, but to all of society, to the community. "Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one other."³⁾ Hans-Georg Gadamer describes the discovery of a kind of belonging in the encounter, assuming the person addressed is open to the question and lets themselves be addressed, while running the risk of facing what they don't know. "A question places what is questioned in a particular perspective. When a question arises, it breaks open the being of the object, as it were. Hence the logos that explicates this opened-up being is the answer. Its sense lies in the sense of the question."⁴⁾ Am I not looking for and trying to photograph the reasons for, and the consequences of, begging? The beggars are right there, to photograph them is to document – which is also important if something is to be documented – but the image stops at the act of depicting. What I see and lack is the participation of the person begging. The image-making stops at noting something, it lacks a dimension – the atmosphere surrounding this person. The photo seems to only confirm a stereotype, which is exactly what I am trying to break with, the generalization, the depicting. I try different angles and techniques, but for me the problem lies in the very *taking* of a photo. If I want to find out what images we face when we *give*, me making photos can't be the main approach. None of those who beg have asked me to tell their story. I'm the one who has taken on the task of figuring out how to respond to the question posed to me: Do you want to give?



"This is not a beggar!"

Michel Foucault talks about how he sees Belgian painter René Magritte's (1898–1967) painting *The Treachery of Images* which depicts a pipe with the caption "Ceci n'est pas un pipe" [This is not a pipe]: "Suddenly I catch myself mixing up being and depicting as if they were one and the same, as if an image were what it depicts – and I realize that if I want to clearly differentiate between an image and what it depicts – and I should (as was inculcated by the logic of Port-Royal more than three hundred years ago) – I must now retract all those hypotheses I just formulated and multiply them by two."⁵⁾ In this case Foucault is talking about a painting, a case could be made that the same isn't true of a photo. Furthermore the way we regard painting and photography has changed since Magritte painted his pipe in 1929, but I maintain that he is expressing the difference between an image and a visual. According to film critic Serge Daney this is a necessary distinction: "So I call 'image' what still holds out against an experience of vision and of the 'visual'. The visual is the optical verification of a procedure

of power (technological, political, advertising, or military power)".⁶⁾ He claims that there is "free play" in the image, much as there is in democracy. Incomplete parts, holes, and openings. In my attempts to photograph the person begging I discovered that I was confusing the beggar with the begging. I had mixed up being with depicting – with representation. In my first encounter I was upset by begging as an activity, not by the person doing the begging. I understand my distaste for asking people who beg if I can photograph them once it's apparent to me that I want to investigate the reason why begging happens. And then there is the question of learning how other people reason when it comes to their giving or not giving and how they see the person who begs. Somehow I need to come up with thirty examples, so I process the photos I've already made and complete them with a few that I find online so that the pictures give as much variation as possible of various begging situations and positions.

In that moment – if I were to take a photo of what you look like, depict you, or if I were to make an image of how I experience you – the meaning of the image is determined. There is no value judgment in that. It's a simple stating of fact.

3.

The recruitment agency hired by the market researcher has been asked to find twenty people who have given money at least once to a person begging on the street and who would consider doing it again. For two hours eight people talk about their approach to people who beg on the street. After this another group talks for two hours.



A qualitative market survey is usually done in a space with two rooms designed for that purpose. So too in this case: The talks are held in one room, led by the market researcher. In an adjacent room the client – I – sit behind a one-way mirror looking at the participants.



Eva, the market researcher, had explained that what she unearths in her market research, specifically, is people's values – their feelings about a product, or a service, feelings connected to the function of a product or a service. She then consolidates these and the company translates them into images in its

marketing of a product. Erik Pauser filmed the market survey using three cameras to capture the entire group, as well as close-ups of each participant. In addition the space had an overview camera, intended to capture everything so that the market researcher could write up a report at the end of it.



4.

Eva has the participants talk about images that show various positions, expressions and gestures that people who beg assume and perform in order to get money. Behind the two-way mirror I see and hear people express their feelings: aggression, guilt, shame, a desire to include and embrace, faith, hope, melancholia, want, authoritarianism and powerlessness. Even if one does give, no one gives to everybody and excuses must be made to justify this. They all have to do with how to keep beggars at a distance. One strategy replaces another. High expectations are placed on the beggar in terms of sensitivity to circumstances. The view of the beggars is that they must “earn their keep”. They must somehow deserve the money they get from the person giving it.

A number of images of begging and people who beg emerge in the discussions.

– I also think that there are some, usually young people, who just sit there with a sign, “I’m hungry”, they smoke, read a paper, look at their cellphone. Usually they’re Roma. I’ve lived in Eastern Europe, I know them... Some people may think they’re just immigrants, but most of these people coming here from Eastern Europe, Romania, Slovakia, are Roma.

– Now that Romania has joined the EU it’s become easier for them to get here. [...] I have Romanian friends who tell me these people are Romani.

– It’s very different if a well-kempt person comes up to me and says: “Hi, excuse me, I lost my wallet, it was stolen, I need to take the train.” That’s something I might believe. Possibly. The situation seems plausible. If a person who hasn’t had a bath in a long time, and smells bad tries the same story it’s not going to have the same impact.

– Gangs.

– It seems more organized, the person begging isn’t the one who gets to keep the money.

– They put the most broken-looking person out there, that’s the most effective.

– Exploitation, one suspects someone else is behind it. [...] But the other kind of beggars that you see, the Swedish ones, who are a bit younger, maybe adults, about 25–30, tend to have addiction issues... In those cases I offer them an apple, which they don’t seem to want. My feeling is that I don’t want what I give to go to drugs or alcohol. ☹️

[Eva: So one shouldn’t support drugs or alcohol?](#)

– No. Even if they’re addicts and that’s what they want, I don’t think that’s a problem you can solve, you can’t just keep topping up their funds. But it gets pretty interesting when you hand them an apple or a sandwich.

[Eva: They don’t want your sandwich, is that it? How do you feel about that?](#)

– It’s sad. It’s even sadder.

– Why do I never ask the beggars in the subway the question: “What do you need the money for. What’s your plan?” I could. But the thought never occurred to me, I just want to be rid of them quickly.⁷⁾ I don’t even want to look at them. [...] I excuse myself. They give me a guilty conscience. If I give to charity, to a cause I know and understand, that does my conscience some good.

The participants in the survey make the same mistake I did when I wanted to take the photo; they conflate the person begging with *being* what they do for a living. When they talk about what they think, feel, how they describe the images they have of those who beg, I also hear a lack of understanding, a gap, a silence – none of them have ever asked those who beg why they’ve ended up where they are, why they do what they do. They have the types of images that might be termed *given*, that occur when one person is the viewer of another. They talk based on the assumption that their money and their position have come to them solely through hard work in a just system, and it is only very rarely suggested that:

1. The beggars may be begging due to the system being unjust.
2. Their own affluence may have something to do with the system being unjust.

In no way do I mean to imply that these are bad, or evil people. I see myself in them. My own vision is often clouded by given images. Their words appear to be a distillate of – and supported by, permeated by – ideas and lines of thinking that circulate in the society we live in today. It’s violent.

5.

When the group discussions are done Eva gets the file from the overview camera, she listens to it as she writes up her report.⁸⁾ I get the report a few days later. It’s 36 pages long. In the report it emerges that a successful beggar:

1. Is in a dire situation that is more or less temporary.
2. Is active – gets something because they are doing something.
3. Is relatively clean – nobody wants to be close to someone who is too dirty.
4. Is “normal” – a person with “normal” clothes that one can identify with is easy to understand – and does not make the giver uncomfortable with strange or unusual rituals.
5. Can offer a reason for being in said situation, or explain what the money is going to be used for.

These answers disqualify many of those who beg on the streets of Sweden. It is clear that beggars, in various ways, need to live up to the demands of “authenticity” that we, the potential benefactors, make. Different types of beggars are ranked in relation to that ideal.

I ask a colleague, Karin Green, who has been active in building a network in which immigrants are integrated into Swedish society – and thus is someone with experience in seeing, countering, and working through prejudice – to structure the footage before the editing of the film.

The editing process takes five months. During this time I prepare for the second film – in which begging people are interviewed.⁹⁾

6.

What Images does the Begging face? Is the title of the second film (to the right in the [photo](#) at the beginning of this chapter).

While the market survey is being processed I decide to find out what some of those who beg are thinking, and how they’re treated on the streets of Sweden. With Ioana Cojocariu as my interpreter I ask twelve people who have come to Sweden through freedom of movement and who beg on the streets of Gothenburg if they want to participate in a half-hour paid interview.¹⁰⁾ Ioana is from Romania and at the time she was relatively new to Gothenburg, there to participate in the Valand Academy MFA Program in Photography. She had previously spoken with some of the Romanian people who beg and tried to help them in various ways. Gathering twelve people who wanted to tell their story on film turned out to be easy for her.¹¹⁾ They trusted Ioana and seemed to trust me too when I sat next to her behind my camera. We had lit a studio, the camera stood ready on its tripod, the lapel mike was laid out on the chair where the interviewees would sit. The others sat waiting on chairs along the wall and listened until it was their turn. This way they did not repeat each other’s answers, but rather

complemented one another’s stories. Primarily I wanted them to talk about how they beg and how they are treated. I didn’t ask them (specifically) to talk about their circumstances, but apparently they were eager to talk about their situation and about why they beg. Ioana told me that they had been mainly been expecting questions about *why* they beg, not *how* they do it, and *how they are treated*. Some of them shook their heads when Ioana insisted on these questions “Swedes are not like the people we’ve met in other countries”, they said. “They are very kind, generous”. They also said that they’d had bad experiences: That social services had wanted to take a child, that someone had spat on them, that people had thrown money at them, or violated them in other ways. They also talk about their circumstances, what they wish for, so that the viewer gets an idea of their situation.

Two of the twelve appeared to have come only for the money, their answers were curt and uninspired, and their body language signaled a desire to get out of there as quickly as possible. These two interviews are not included in the film.

7.

Together these two films make up the installation *What images does the giving face? & What images does the begging face?*¹²⁾ The viewer sits in the midst of this flow of images that are put into play in every encounter between giving and begging people on the street.

The plaque for the installation reads: "Through what eyes do I see the person who begs; which images are given in advance, and what images can I make of what I see? Through what eyes does the person begging see the giver?"

We all carry unconscious mental images that are amalgams of elements from (national) cultures, structures, decision processes, and institutions, but many images are replaceable, they can be destroyed and new images can be created."

When I've set up the film that consists of the market survey of givers across

from the film showing the interviews with those who beg, it is not to position them as opposites engaged in a constant struggle. Rather it is about a dynamic process concerning how ideas play out with and against each other – a process situated in time and space, a documentary. The two films show the distance that exists, visualizes it. An alienation is taking place – it is benevolent but also unkind.

In this installation the viewer is the one who has the opportunity to challenge, destroy, open up space for new images, and possibly act. Does this mean that everything is up to the viewer? It can't be. The question is reflected back at the creator of this set-up, it is a theme that runs through the dissertation.

8.

"Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it. Hence the product is something removed or deducted from the process of producing: between the act of producing and the product, something becomes detached, thus giving the vagabond, nomad subject a residuum."¹³⁾

(Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari)

"How do you become a successful beggar in Sweden?" Language isn't the only thing that cracks in this sentence, the entire situation on the street does, for everyone involved. Civil society in Sweden has reacted strongly to the new reality in which people beg on the streets. Two main streams of desire have emerged: to forbid or to help. The danger is, as the above quote implies, that begging and giving is explained by explaining "the beggar". "The beggar" is objectified and becomes the problem, and at times also "the solution". My market survey of givers generated images of a number of desires. The privileged perspective served as its starting point – what images and attitudes about begging are in circulation among the givers.¹⁴⁾ By expressing various strategies the "givers" attempt to control the emotions that are triggered in the encounter with those who beg. This way the giver's self image is strengthened (or even

created). These images matter in terms of investigating and trying to understand what's going on. Three years later Erik Hanson describes a similar approach in his master's thesis in cultural geography: "When it comes to research on begging as a social phenomenon, the studies have usually assumed two main purposes and perspectives. Either they've tried to understand, or convey the living conditions of those who beg in various societies, or how political decisions, systems, campaigns, legislation, and institutions affect the conditions for beggars in various ways. In other words, there is strikingly little research that assumes the perspective of the viewer, the civilian citizen who in their encounter with the beggar on the street is faced with the choice of either helping or denying the vulnerable person."¹⁵⁾

The gaze and images of the viewer are discussed widely in various critical theories in the context of artistic research and art works. A specific question that beset me – and that actually and practically always should beset me and others who work on similar projects involving vulnerable populations – is how I can operate without becoming part of what literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describes as "the work of subject constitution mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization. And the subaltern woman will remain as mute as ever."¹⁶⁾

9.


In July and August of 2012, one year after my market survey, artists and Ph.D. students Reich-Szyber staged *Tiggarlördag & Persondesign* [Beggar's Saturday & Persondesign] along a commercial street in central Stockholm. Thirty-five people aged 17 to 73 participated. Each participant had a sign that stated exactly what they were begging for.¹⁷⁾ "When we go over the information we've been given, it appears most effective to beg for something that seems palpable to the givers (a visit to the dentist, a winter jacket, a pair of shoes, a gift for grandma). Appearing to be a trustworthy, middle-aged, well-behaved man is good. Appearing to be a young, happy woman with a future ahead of her is also good. The two groups that fared worst were those whose begging message concerned homelessness or poverty. The ten beggars who got the least money over the longest time were older on average,

more likely to be women, several ‘looked foreign’, or appeared to be down-and-out.” Reich and Szyber determined that it is more important that the parameters of the transaction are clear than that the begging person is in actual need – in the sense of being poor. So far Reich-Szyber’s investigative performance overlaps with my own. But the market survey revealed more nuance.¹⁸⁾ Other than what criteria the begging person should ideally fit, the report also explains *why* the givers are bothered if the above criteria aren’t met.

- The givers desire an equal situation.
- The givers don’t want to feel bothered and uncomfortable.

This is due to certain aspects of the way that beggars from abroad communicate being foreign to Swedish givers, such as:

- Using religious symbolism that doesn’t register, isn’t understood, or appreciated.
- Assuming a submissiveness that is experienced as negative or offensive.
- Using intrusive manners or looks to catch the attention and interest of the giver.
- In order for a donation to be possible, or for the giving to be experienced as a pleasant act, the giver wants to maintain respect for the beggar.
- Human dignity must never be questioned or gradated, also many of the givers feel that begging is *a mutual relationship*, between the person begging and the person giving.

The project blog that I’ve been writing since 2011 was called beggingasaprofession.eu, my intent in using that title was similar to that of Reich-Szyber. They were thinking in terms of “removing the stigma from begging and making it a job like any other. At the same time the business needs to turn a profit.” Could a begging person become “successful” in Sweden? They failed to turn a profit; The Beggars’ Saturday project ran up a loss of over 90 000 kronor. “The thought experiment in which a market-oriented business model is applied to phenomena like necessity and a plea for charity; to let the entrepreneurial mindset, so to speak, cover increasingly wide swaths of our relationships with each other may reveal something of our present time to all of us.”¹⁹⁾ They speak of being complicit in and working within the system. A system where work is organized, effectivized, done for profit and in order to satiate needs in the consumer, even if these needs haven’t even existed before, a creation of need out of desire. There is a notion of “the rules of the game”, of “adaptation.” 

Four years later the financial economist and priest Stanislav Emirov, writes about playing down begging, seeing it as an independent business within the realm of wealth transfer and regulating its scope and character through licensing and continuous control.”²⁰⁾ In Stockholm, where Emirov is an aid worker at the Calvinist church he, and his research team (which he claims knows more than anyone in Sweden about the problems of begging), has rated those who beg according to motivation on a scale from one to five and found that most of them are at level one: “[...] the beggar hates begging, only begs to support himself and their dependents – and they are prepared to stop as soon as he or she has a job or another source of income.”²¹⁾ According to their calculations ones, twos, and threes make 80 kronor per day in 2014, that’s a decrease from the previous year. He has yet to meet a four or five who works in begging. A four leaves the door open for other business opportunities, while a five is “a beggar who is completely at peace with being a beggar. They beg despite the availability of other realistic means of support and would not quit, even if he or she were offered a regular – according to our Western standards – job with a normal salary.”²²⁾ Emirov searches for a long time, in the end he does find a five: Michel, who is 35 years old and lives in Paris, in a three-room apartment in Montmartre. In 2014 Emirov goes to Paris to meet Michel for the first time. “Imagine my surprise when a convertible silver Maserati pulled up in front of me [...] the man was dressed in beige chinos and a striped tennis shirt and seemed well-kempt, cultivated and sympathetic.”²³⁾ Emirov is offered a ride and Michel buys him brunch. Emirov gets to study his begging technique as he begs on a street corner in Düsseldorf, he observes him at a distance, through binoculars, for six hours. “In total he made 73 euro and 12 cents in three hours.”²⁴⁾ Afterward they discuss how Michel did it. He says that location is the most important aspect, then the time of day – there needs to be a steady stream of people, but they mustn’t be too stressed, they need to have time to make eye contact. He continues to describe what Michel does, his hours and his income.²⁵⁾ The conversations with Michel that follow cover a number of different begging techniques – according to him some are many thousands of years old – such as tremors, disability ruses, signs, how to work with the media, it’s reminiscent of stories that intend to reveal magicians’ tricks.²⁶⁾

Michel’s story thus provides one answer for how a person can become a successful beggar in Europe, or the world. However, among the fifty-odd people I’ve spoken to during the years 2011 to 2014 on the streets of Gothenburg and Stockholm, I haven’t met or heard of anyone even vaguely resembling Michel. Nor are there any quotes from recorded audio, images, or other documentation to prove Michel’s existence. Stanislav Emirov doesn’t let any of the other people he meets during his many years as an aid worker speak in the book – the ones who make 80 kronor a day. Nor does he speak to any givers.

In my market survey that investigated how you can become a successful beggar in Sweden by speaking with givers, I assumed that every business – legal or illegal uses marketing techniques. But why do I think it’s more okay for Coca Cola to use marketing tricks than for a beggar to do the same. Emirov does let Michel say: “The beggar’s lie to the giver serves an excuse for the lie the giver tells himself.”²⁷⁾ He further describes this lie: “They view their surroundings through the prism of their role as givers. They want to be givers to satiate their own emo- and ego desires. And in order to be givers they need to tell themselves that beggars beg out of financial necessity.”²⁸⁾ But that is an image that only one begging person – Michel, who doesn’t beg out of necessity – has of those who give, who have been generalized in this claim.

The story of Michel also falls into a different framework than mine. The book is called *Why do the Roma Beg?* Michel gets to serve as an example of how Roma have developed begging as an art form to survive inside their own culture next to “the majority culture”. He dismisses those Roma, such as Katarina Taikon and Soraya Post, who have advocated for their civil rights, as being assimilated. Emirov ends by saying that nobody speaks *to* the Roma who beg and that policy aimed at assimilation is not the answer.²⁹⁾ It does seem like he wants to speak *to* but I question both *how* he does it and what his intentions are.

10.

Spivak challenges the self-image of Western reason, bringing my own challenge of my self-image to my mind. As a doctoral student and subject-constituting artist carrying out a project with people who beg, I also inhabit the position of giver. “In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual must *systematically* unlearn her female privilege.”³⁰⁾ Unlearning doesn’t merely mean exchanging one image for another, it isn’t until the interviews with the begging people are shown across from the market survey that any kind of critique and reflection of these images of desire can take place. One could describe the installation as creating a space – for the viewer – to understand more about what conditions exist to grasp what takes place between the giving

and the begging. The normative images of both those who are expected to give, as well as of those who beg must be renegotiated and reformulated, but the discussion must also deal with the position in society where these images are created.

When the film of the market survey and the film with the interviews are set up as an installation, the viewer sits in the midst of the image stream of social and sociopolitical processes. In a sort of mutual act, even if the position of one is forced by necessity and the position of the other – which is normative in the relationship – is given *out of charity*.

The beggar reveals that we’re pretending that everything is fine.

Chapter 2: Staged Work (film)

What Images does the
Giving face? & What Images
does the Begging face?

2.3 On Seeing Images

1.

Between 1999 and 2001 I worked in South Africa. During one of these projects, which lasted for two months, I lived in Soweto. I only saw two other light-skinned people while I was there, one was an albino black South African and another a white boss at a temporary roadwork project. I remember it well because I was so surprised, they stood out – I couldn't see myself. A new political day had dawned in South Africa, attitudes and motivations had changed, conditions had improved slightly, and there was a vision of other positions being possible. The images of the townships – that had been constantly transmitted as black and white photographs of violence, suffering, and uprisings – had been etched into my cornea and become mental images. The people I stayed with said: "We wish more people would come and stay here so that 'whities' will stop being so scared of us." They spoke of how they wished that the images constructed during the apartheid era would be broken down and new ones emerge, in cooperation.

To see images is an act. This is a thought and a practice that was founded in me during these projects in South Africa.

I came from Sweden, I was a visitor and a bystander – I saw what was happening in that place with other eyes, I was astonished by the differences there, what their norm had become and what mine was. It made no sense to me. I didn't pick up my camera for a month, not until I knew what I wanted. I wanted to make photos based on mutuality – or at least an exchange. The way I put it was that I didn't want to *take* photos – I didn't want to stay solely in the position of the viewer – I wanted to get the image. I was searching for intimacy, because it is in those encounters that we share our internal images, the ones shaped

by both the impressions we have of each other as well as of the social situation in which the encounter takes place. It may just as well be old images that become relevant, or new ones created then and there. We tell our stories because we want to tell them, because the situation, rather than our position, demands it. I began seeing my job as "developing" these images through various practices, and then activating the images, mediating them. I don't own them and I can't sell them unless we have an agreement. I ended up with a series of works that declared the social and political context in which they were created.

I wrestled – and still wrestle with – the question Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak phrases as follows: "How [does one] keep the ethnocentric Subject from establishing itself by selectively defining an Other. This is not a program for the Subject as such; rather it is a program for the benevolent *Western* intellectual."³¹ She poses the question that a privileged person needs to ask herself in relation to someone who is not privileged, a question about the conditions for the negotiation of power. It is a question that pertains to how practice and theory are wielded. I needed to understand how and where these projects would be transmitted.

At the time I took a very critical stance to the art market, I couldn't sign these projects as mine in a show. And my gallery on Östermalm, an upscale neighborhood in Stockholm, didn't see how they could sell these works. Due to this we terminated our contract in 2000. Since then I have produced and transmitted my works by myself or in collaboration with others (sometimes even with curators). My time in South Africa changed me as well my work.

2.

One expression that's often used about works like mine, including at times by the artists themselves, is "giving someone a voice". Regardless of whether that's a question or a declaration of intent nobody can give another person their voice, everybody has a voice. Though the right conditions need to exist, be provided, or invented.

Over the next six years I worked with a number of projects in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza, now Palestine, the last being *A Heart from Jenin*. At the time I strongly doubted my ability to retell the events depicted in the film. Palestinian poet Kefah Fanni gave me a piece of advice that has stuck with me ever since. He said: "Cecilia, you can never speak for us, but you can give your view of what you see here."



The film is about Ahmed, a Palestinian boy who lived in the Jenin refugee camp, on the West Bank. In November 2005 he was shot to death by an Israeli sniper. He was 12 years old. His parents decided to donate his heart to the other side of the wall, to Israel. A gift can effect change when there is someone on the other side willing to accept it. Samah is the name of the Israeli girl who now lives with Ahmed's heart. For Ahmed's parents their son lives on through the girl as a hope for peace with Israel.³²⁾

Kefah's advice made me appreciate my "outsider's gaze", I was accepted as someone who could contribute my presence. I depicted the empowerment that every person should feel that they have: the Palestinian family that gives a gift no politician can give and in doing so breaks isolation when they make contact with the Israeli family that accepts their gift. The film was mainly shown in the West, in the context in which I live. I felt I wanted to show this act here, because it was needed here. This film that is about the gift – despite distance, given images, framing – constitutes a background for my work on begging.

When I interviewed art curator and feminist Fataneh Farhani she commented: "International artists – I see it all the time – come to me with an idea that looks beautiful on paper, but the moment they see reality they rethink the project, because reality dictates facts."³³⁾

During my stay on the West Bank I understood that *given images* – normative images – can be defended. "Clichés, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct have the socially recognized function of protecting us against reality, that is, against the claim on our thinking attention which all events and facts arouse by virtue of their existence. If we were responsive to this claim all the time, we would soon be exhausted; the difference in Eichmann was only that he clearly knew no such claim at all."³⁴⁾ So writes Hanna Arendt. She describes common sense, as a sixth sense that is not mainly characterized by its sanity. She claims that a sensory world is made comprehensible together when we live under similar conditions. This is how common images arise.³⁵⁾ The common is necessary, the common evolves in a place and these (common) images must be respected. That doesn't mean that they don't also need to be constantly challenged. But how?

3.

To some extent I am caught in a framing – as is everyone – and this must be challenged. It is possible to be aware of given images and it's also possible to become aware of the systems that images are made from and for, but never completely since it is the system I live in. All images are transmitted through some type of framing. One obvious example of framing is the photograph that was chosen as the best International News Image in the 2010 Swedish Picture of the Year awards. Paul Hansen took the photo after the earthquake on Haiti, one of the worst natural disasters in modern time with around 212,000 confirmed dead and about 300,000 injured.

In the image 15-year-old Fabienne Cherisma lies dead on a collapsed roof in the Haitian capital Port au Prince.³⁶⁾ Afterward the image became a hot topic online – because of another image that captured the group of photographers that had gathered around Fabienne.

Nathan Weber's photograph is another example of framing.³⁷⁾ It is a meta-photograph of a situation and it intends to illustrate how photos are taken. Media ethics, boundaries concerning image manipulation, whether bodies can be arranged in order to take a picture, representation, all these aspects also come into play in an artistic documentary practice (documentary methods that are transmitted in art spaces). Judith Butler writes the following about framing: "To learn to see the frame that blinds us to what we see is no easy matter. And if there is a critical role for visual culture during times of war it is precisely to thematize the forcible frame, the one that conducts the dehumanizing norm, that restricts what is perceivable, and, indeed, what can be."³⁸⁾ During the years that I worked in Palestinian and Israeli territories I was part of an international media discussion on mediation and the intention of the photographer. Israeli artist Bracha Ettinger brought the image below, containing a snapshot from an Israeli checkpoint on the West Bank, the discussion concerned questions that should always be relevant in situations in which power is wielded.



In 1978–9 photographer Susan Meiselas traveled to Nicaragua to photograph the uprising against the Somoza regime. While there she went through a change in how she viewed images, “It went beyond the question of ‘Why am I taking photographs?’ or ‘Who am I taking pictures for?’ It was a pivotal moment. It gradually became clear to me that as an American, I had a responsibility to know what the U.S. was doing in other countries.”³⁹⁾ She returns 25 years later and hangs 19 of these photographs “mural size” (about 2×3 meters), in the places in which they were photographed and ask people what they remember from this time. This results in a series of videos and audio recordings.⁴⁰⁾ These stories recharge the photos in the installation *Reframing History* that has been shown as a part of various art exhibitions.⁴¹⁾

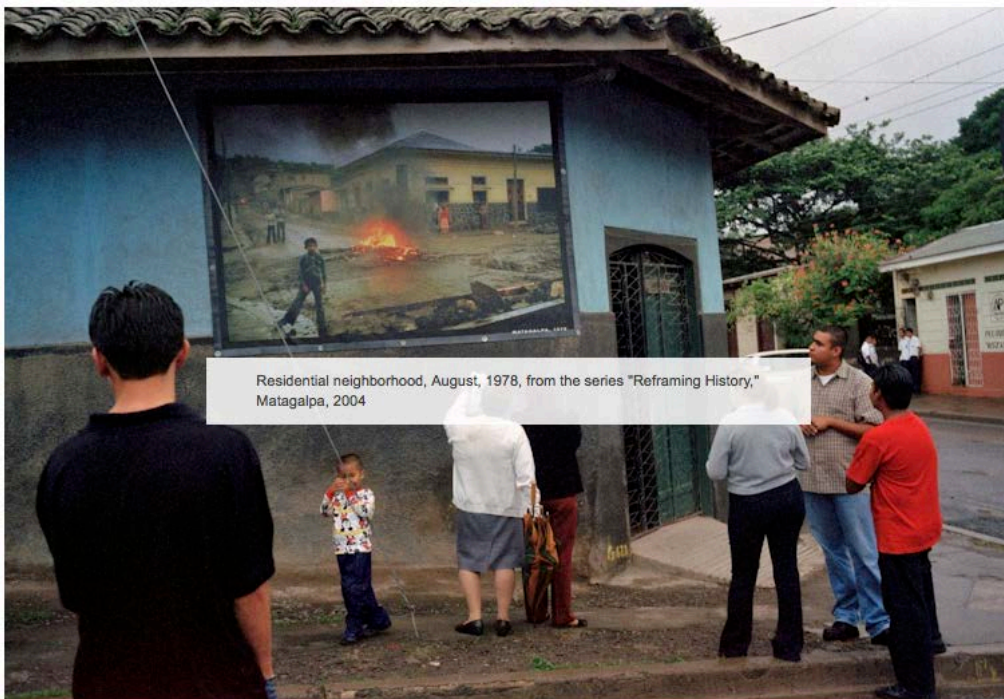
Framing is in the attitude, in the intention before the photograph is made in the moment of photographing it, in how it is transmitted, in the language, in the phrasing of the questions of the transmitter. “What is your view of the political situation in Greece?” the TV reporter asks. From that question we know that this is not about portraying a person, rather a contextual image is expected and the person responding is to give their perspective, their view, or whatever we should call it. A reporter could ask similar questions of the person begging, “What is your view of the political situation in Sweden?” But the reporters don’t, they ask other questions. They ask questions regarding the concrete situation of those who beg, their home life, health, ethnicity, studies, if they’re organized and at times with an undertone that implies that organization seems criminal in nature. Questions that would touch on success and creativity aren’t asked either, the reporter’s questions stay within a certain frame. This way the answer – the image that is given – is prevented from falling outside of this frame. It is the framing of the privileged. The requests from those who beg also stay within a certain frame. “Hey, a krona please?” There is an expectation put on the other. This expectation – which goes both ways, those who are expected to give and those who are expected to receive, risks becoming a frozen positioning of a viewer. The assumption is that we can’t understand each other.

Who will have copyright on this image? The unidentified Palestinian man exposed to violence?



Who owns what in an occupation?

Who owns images of violence?
The person taking the photo or the person depicted?



Residential neighborhood, August, 1978, from the series "Reframing History,"
Matagalpa, 2004

4.

Filmmaker Werner Herzog is about to show a clip from his film *Into the Abyss* in a master class lecture at the film festival in Locarno. He tells the story of an interview with a key figure that he only got 40 minutes with. "He has to be broken up, watch this film clip." We

see pastor Richard Lopez in front of a field of memorial crosses, this is the cemetery of the State of Texas and this is where those sentenced to death are buried. Richard Lopez gives a brief account of how he assists the person on death row until their last breath. Herzog then asks what the pastor does to recover from his duties, because it must be difficult, and the priest tells him that he plays golf, his voice lightens up; he gets personal. There are lots of squirrels on the golf course, he says. Herzog asks "Please tell me about an encounter with a squirrel." The man eagerly tells of a time when he was close to running over a squirrel, but managed to stop the car. "Life is precious", he says. And suddenly he starts to cry, he can't maintain the façade – he returns to the mission he's on his way to and says: "I cannot stop the process for them. But

I wish I could." The camera lingers for a long time on the man, now filled with sorrow. Herzog comments on this event: "All of a sudden we look deeply into his heart. [...] I don't know how I got there but, eh, you see how he started to get a bit mellow but regained his composure and you have to have the wisdom of a snake, you have to be coiled up, just wait and let him speak and you have to strike at the right moment with the right venom, right question, do the right move." Herzog speaks of *getting the story that transcends the lens*, or catching, enticing, this image. "That's something I cannot teach you and neither can a film school. You should always find a way to look deep into someone." In this transaction the filmmaker is after the images and the stories – Herzog claims that *cinema verité* is a chimera, even if the filmmaker tries to be a fly on the wall, the filmmaker will affect the course of events – an ethical negotiation takes place. In some cases the ethics are subordinate to, in others they are above the aesthetics.

5.

My starting point for this project has been my experience of a non-encounter on a street, in Sweden where I live. I want to investigate and examine this distance, approach it: Is a renegotiation of the space between us possible, so that the images that both create and maintain the distance can be destroyed, renegotiated – so that new ones can be made? The problem is that there are already many images in the way.

6.

A year after the publication of Susan Sontag's 1993 book *Regarding the Pain of Others* Judith Butler began writing the essays that were published in 2009 as the book *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* In it she discusses Sontag's book and among other things, the critique leveled at Sontag when she said that the photographs from Abu Ghraib were photos of "us". Some felt that this claim "[...] again the kind of self-preoccupation that paradoxically and painfully took the place of a reflection on the suffering of others." But what she asked was "whether the nature of the policies prosecuted by this administration, and the hierarchies deployed to carry them out makes such acts [of torture] likely. Considered in this light, the photographs are us."⁴²

In a similar way the begging and giving exists within an economic structure that develops hierarchies. The begging is about "us" in the sense that the action is a consequence of a certain hierarchy of power within a particular system. My project involves many people and ethical quandaries arise along every step of the working process in conjunction with the aesthetic choices. Distance and intimacy, viewing and interaction, constant negotiation over space takes place between us, situations in which designations, stories, and images emerge. How these become politically significant requires examples, and this project may possibly be such an example. *To see images is an act.*

Chapter 2: Images
Notes

1. 📖 Elfriede Jelinek, *Rosamunde from Döden och Flickan I-V: Prinsessdramer*, translated into Swedish by Ia Lind and Magnus Lindman, (Umeå: Atrium, 2011). German title: *Der Tod und Das Mädchen I-V: Prinzessinendramen* [Death and the Maiden I-V: Princess Plays]. The German original reads: "Ist das ein Stück Mensch, was ich da sehe? Ist es ein Bild von einem Menschen? Ist es ein Mensch von einem Bild? Ja, das ist ein Mensch von einem Bild. Den kenn ich doch! Nein, doch nicht."
2. 📖 A qualitative market survey attempts to shine a light on the underlying attitudes and values in a certain area. It also aims to give insight into various behaviors and emotions and how these can shape our choices and opinions. A qualitative survey looks for patterns in opinions and values. The questions posed pertain to why people think a certain way, why many choose a certain product and what the underlying reason is for the existence of a certain behavior. A qualitative survey doesn't answer how many, what portion, or what percentage, think a certain way – these answers are delivered by quantitative surveys. In a qualitative survey a few people are interviewed and great care is taken that the people interviewed fill the criteria of interest to the survey, as opposed to a quantitative survey where representativeness is important. In a qualitative survey it's only of interest to interview the people who are affected by the subject in question in one way or another. A qualitative survey is done using in-depth interviews or group discussions the length of which are adjusted according to need as is the number of people interviewed. A common time frame for an in-depth interview might be an hour and a group discussion might take two hours.
3. 📖 Gadamer, 355.
4. 📖 Gadamer, 356.
5. 📖 Michel Foucault, *Diskursernas kamp, texter i urval*, eds. Thomas Götselius and Ulf Olsson, (Höör: Brutus Östlings bokförlag Symposion, 2008), 60. Title of the French original: *Dits et Ecrits*.
6. 📖 Serge Daney, "Before and after the image", *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, Vol. 21, (1999):1. Accessed April 12, 2016, www.home.earthlink.net/~steeve/Daney_before.html.
7. 📖 At the time of this market survey it was less common that the begging people had signs explaining what they needed the money for. Over the years that followed there was an increase in the number of signs, often handwritten, though some had photos of children with printed text on them.
8. 📖 This report is available in the [archives](#).
9. 📖 The film has English subtitles: *Market research – which images is a person facing when giving – or not – to a person begging?* (16 min.). Accessed April 12, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/81892362>. The market researcher's report is available in the [archive](#).
10. 📖 Ioana Cojocariu coordinated and interpreted the interviews we filmed with begging people who'd traveled to Gothenburg in Sweden in 2011. She also cut and translated the film. Ioana is an artist, see chapter 4.1 paragraph 8.
11. 📖 The film has English subtitles: *Interviews with begging EU citizens – which images is the begging person facing?* (57:30 min.). Accessed April 12, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/66966202>. All interviews have been transcribed and are available in the site's [archives](#).
12. 📖 In 2012 I uploaded these films to a new (at the time) project blog www.tiggerisomyrke.se [www.beggingasaprofession.eu] that I managed as a Ph.D. student. The blog opened a public window on my work process.
13. 📖 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. Robery Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 2000), 26. Accessed April 12, 2016, www.libcom.org/files/Anti-Oedipus.pdf.

"Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it. Hence the product is something removed or deducted from the process of producing: between the act of producing and the product, something becomes detached, thus giving the vagabond, nomad subject a residuum."
14. 📖 The market survey was done in July 2011 and the film was published in April 2013 at the same time as the interview film, which was made parallel to it.
15. 📖 Erik Hansson, "Som att världen kommit hit, Stockholmares upplevelser av tiggeri våren 2014" (Master's thesis in cultural geography, Stockholm University), 7.

Further, on the same page Hansson writes: "The point of this thesis is to try to understand what ideas the majority culture is projecting on these marginalized and vulnerable people, i.e. to study certain mental processes that have social consequences."
16. 📖 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A*

Reader, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 90.

17. 📖 The following description is from their project page: “Through ads in among others Metro and Situation Stockholm [a free daily paper, and a magazine sold by homeless people] we sought people who were willing to beg for something they felt that they needed (or wanted to give to others). The pay was 100 kronor/hour and one got to keep half of what one earned begging. The other half was to go to Persondesign. 35 people in the age [range] 17 to 73 years participated.” “Beggars Saturday & Persondesign”. Accessed April 27, 2016, <http://reich-szyber.com/en/portfolio/beggars-saturday-persondesign/>.
18. 📖 The market researcher’s [report](#).
19. 📖 Reich-Szyber, “Beggars Saturday & Persondesign”.
20. 📖 Stanislav Emirov, *Varför tigger romer?*, (Stockholm: Karneval, 2016), 229.
- 21, 22. 📖 *Ibid.*, 16.
23. 📖 *Ibid.*, 153.
24. 📖 *Ibid.*, 178.
25. 📖 “‘I never work 30 days a month’, Michel commented. ‘Only 25. A six-day workweek. Not eight hours a day either, more like six. That’s pure begging hours. One has to eat, change money, move about. But on the other hand I can get more givers per hour than 30. It could be 50 or 60, If the stream is good and I’m on it. The last time I worked in Stockholm I went home with almost 4,000 Euro after two weeks and in Gothenburg more than 7,000 Euro after five weeks. But that was a long time ago. Last year.’” His monthly income seems to be at least 50,000 Euro. Michel’s expenditures are high. Since he never begs in his hometown of Paris – someone might recognize him – he travels to a different city in Europe each week, he mentions Oslo, London, Istanbul, Luxembourg, medium-sized towns in Italy, Austria, and Switzerland. He either rents a room or lives with friends. Michel also owns a small apartment, a run-down one in a suburb where he repays his begging friends by letting them spend the night when they visit him, they don’t know about his other apartment. Both apartments in Paris are bought on installment (he can’t get a bank loan since he has no proof of income). He has a Maserati convertible, he often goes out to restaurants with his girlfriend and sends money back home to his family in Romania – in any case they don’t know how well off he is. The question is how Michel makes ends meet. “Many beggars nowadays do more than just begging” is one of Emirov’s headlines but it’s not clear if Michel also does other business. He says he will continue to beg despite leading a double life and longing for a normal life.
26. 📖 Emirov, 163–192.
- 27, 28. 📖 *Ibid.*, 165.
29. 📖 There is a discussion of Roma in [chapter 5.2](#).
30. 📖 Spivak, 91. The quote is followed by the sentence: “This systemic unlearning involves learning to critique postcolonial discourse with the best tools it can provide and not simply substituting the lost figure of the colonized.”
31. 📖 Spivak, 87.
32. 📖 “A Heart from Jenin”. Accessed July 26, 2016, www.ceciliaparsberg.se/a-heart-from/.
33. 📖 Cecilia Parsberg, “Networking on the Wall”, *Eurozine*, (May 30, 2006). Accessed July 27, 2016, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-05-30-parsberg-en.html>. First published as: “Nätverkande på muren”, *Glänta* No. 1–2 (2006). Accessed July 26, 2016, www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-05-30-parsberg-sv.html.
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35. 📖 Arendt, 15.
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38. 📖 Judith Butler, “Torture and the Ethics of Photography: Thinking with Sontag” in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable*, (New York: Verso, 2016), 100.
39. 📖 Susan Meiselas “Nicaragua: Somosa Regime”. Accessed April 12, 2016, www.susanmeiselas.com/latin-america/nicaragua/#id=somoza_regime.
40. 📖 Susan Meiselas “Nicaragua: Reframing History”. Accessed April 12, 2016, www.susanmeiselas.com/latin-america/nicaragua/#id=reframing-history.
41. 📖 Susan Meiselas “Nicaragua: Exhibitions”. Accessed April 12, 2016, www.susanmeiselas.com/latin-america/nicaragua/#id=exhibitions.

In the exhibition “Crusading”, compiled by curator Jan-Erik Lundström for The Picture Museum in Umeå

and Fotografins hus in Stockholm, Susan Meiselas installation was shown together with one of my installations:

“both explore conflicts of power in a historical perspective.”. Accessed April 12, 2106,

www.ceciliaparsberg.se/crusading/.

42.  Butler, 99.

Cecilia
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Places I

3.1 Places I

Notes

Staged Work { Places I }

3.1 Places I



Götgatan, Stockholm, January 2013.

The image shows traces of a human being: The blanket, the snow melted by the warmth of the sewer. There is a yet to be told story of a person as well as the story of a financial and political ¹⁾ system that person is living in. I photograph this image quickly, with my cellphone, as I pass by. I live in the same financial, political system. We share an urban landscape, but there's a lot that we don't share. The story isn't there yet – the circumstances that the blanket leaves traces of has no narrator. The person who might be addressed is outside the frame in

this image, outside the boundary of what is being addressed.

On the paths I walk daily, in my urban landscape, I continue to photograph more places for begging. The traces in the streets show that not everyone in the city has been taken into account in the planning of the city's social life. ²⁾

Chapter 3: Staged Work (a photo series)

Places I

Chapter 3: Places I
Notes

1. ☞ “[The term] *bios politikos* denoted, explicitly only the realm of human affairs, stressing the action *praxis*, needed to establish and sustain it.” Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 13.
2. ☞ The first photo in a series comprising 38 images that I call *The Places of Begging*. Eleven of these photographs have been published in the text “Giving in Free Movement Europe”, *Eurozine*, (August 6, 2016). Accessed, April 27, 2016, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2014-08-06-parsberg-en.html>.

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Gestures

4.1 Politics of Waiting

4.2 About *Body on Street*

Notes

Staged Work { Body on Street }

4.1 Politics of Waiting

1.

*The streets transport a flow of bodies, people in constant motion, in and out of social activities, an ongoing social choreography. And there, between walking legs, I catch a glimpse of bodies kneeling on the ground in various positions, bodies that spell necessity and need. How do the bodies acquire their grammatical form?*¹⁾

The giver is standing and the begging person is kneeling, this is happening on a pedestrian mall in central Stockholm, in free movement Europe, in a Europe where you are free to move as you choose. In his dissertation Kent Sjöström differentiates *action* from *activity*: “My assumption is that the body on and off stage is *intentional*, even though physical activities usually considered unintentional aren’t necessarily understood in these terms.”²⁾ He claims that there are no unintentional movements, but that the intentions of certain movements are unconscious. The difference depends on why any given movement is made, something that can be understood once an activity is put into context, but not necessarily from the movement in and of itself (which Ioana Cojocariu’s film makes clear, as described in paragraph 8 below). Kneeling can be seen as a prayer position in which somebody humbles themselves in the face of something larger, but also as a plea, and as suffering in the face of something that has hit and continues to hit – systemically.





“What possibilities exist in the space of action between the begging person and the giving person and how can these be conveyed?”, “What images does the giving person face when they give or don't give to a begging person?”, “What images does the begging person face as they kneel?”. Drottninggatan, Stockholm, March 2013.



Stockholm, March 2013.

2.



On February 14, 2013 Swedish morning paper *Dagens Nyheter* ran a bold headline across half a page: “I can’t stand seeing beggars on the street any longer”³⁾ In the article Kerstin Vinterhed writes: “Because after all there is a mutual humiliation of both the person begging and the person giving – or not giving. A humiliation of those – who like me and most people in this country – have participated in building a society in which begging and charity has been replaced with the right to aid.” But if that’s the case, have we not also participated in breaking down that right? She writes: “a humiliation of”, and this implies that those who beg and those who are expected to give are humiliated by a system, by a financial and political matrix.⁴⁾ She can’t stand it anymore, but where can she go? She turns to language, to the political. She has that power, is part of a culture that takes for granted that one’s voice can affect prevailing policy. Still, she says she feels powerless. What should she do? She can’t understand what’s happening around her, to her, in relation to those who beg.

I can’t stand my own powerlessness either, I’m not sufficient, I can’t embrace, I stand crestfallen in front of you. Who am I if I don’t give, what should I do, if I’m alone, are there others like me, can I become less powerless by becoming a “we”?

Many proclaim that they can’t stand it and don’t speak, don’t address, converse, indict. What would it do to me if I didn’t make images, if I were to stop naming and describing what I see around me? What would it do to me if I ignored those who beg? What does it do to me to not give to the person who asks to receive?⁵⁾ It concerns me, but is it just a selfish concern? Anne Carson writes: “To combat the resistance of language you must keep on talking, my analyst said.” Regardless of what I feel that I can’t stand, I am part of the hegemonic order that has the privilege of being heard in society and that benefits from the prevailing system, which I also accept to some degree and am “employed by”. The person begging does speak, but only after being spoken to by the person included in society. I’m looking for more than just being aware of the gap. I rephrase the question: What would ignoring the begging do to me?

I am damned if I give and damned if I don’t give. I can’t stand being a part of this “we”! What is it doing to me? To my body and my soul? By dint of my actions I am part of a collective movement, I get answers I can’t be without, questions I can’t act without, can’t ignore, regardless of if I accept them or not. I don’t actually want to stand it, because the inescapable fact remains that what my senses encounter isn’t an image, it’s not an idea, it’s a shared existence. It’s a tragedy. The pattern of the human condition. ☹

I find myself performing new gestures that don't feel voluntary – they're not voluntary, yet they are performed by me, by my body. I also try to understand what structure would have to collapse for my existence to become intelligible and manageable again.⁶⁾ Iris Murdoch writes that "Obsession shrinks reality to a single pattern", then further describes how ideas need to be teased apart back into thoughts for it to be possible to see what's really separate and what might yet again be seen as connected.⁷⁾ But how? Tore Nordenstam suggests a way of seeing: "The expressions and the parts of the pattern are woven into activities, that in turn have their determined place in the whole we call a culture, or way of life."⁸⁾ Is the begging person part of a pattern? What patterns are drawn across the urban landscapes of the cities? Hannah Arendt writes: "It is because of this already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose; but it is also because of this medium, in which action alone is real, that it 'produces' stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things."⁹⁾ What frustrates me, and others, is that they, with their request to get, to get to share, spin their thread into the web, hence my question to the person begging: How can you become successful? In this context the question points to an impossible equation. As Sara Stridsberg put it: "Begging is done by the one who owns nothing and who asks for charity and it's an entirely linguistic matter that becomes a worldly matter (you wife or your husband is not begging if she or he asks for a sandwich, you are not begging when you ask your boss for a raise). Begging is done by those without rights, a pet begs, those whose demands are not considered legitimate."¹⁰⁾ This is the context in which to understand Kent Sjöström when he writes that he assumes the body to be *intentional* both on and off stage. The begging person wants their posture to bring them success in begging, an improvement. Begging happens within a social structure, within a political system and the begging person may achieve some improvement – but is that enough? What kind of change is sought and demanded by those who exclaim that they can't stand it anymore? *How do you become a successful beggar in Sweden?* Begging as well as giving are gestures with which something is exchanged, related gestures in an urban environment. In a system that has finally turned ironic on people. I share the frustration that Vinterhed expresses: "I can't stand it."

And I wonder to what extent I am a cog in the machinery, my question will never be answered, but between the poles of empowerment and powerlessness there is a tension. My question is expressed in my posture.



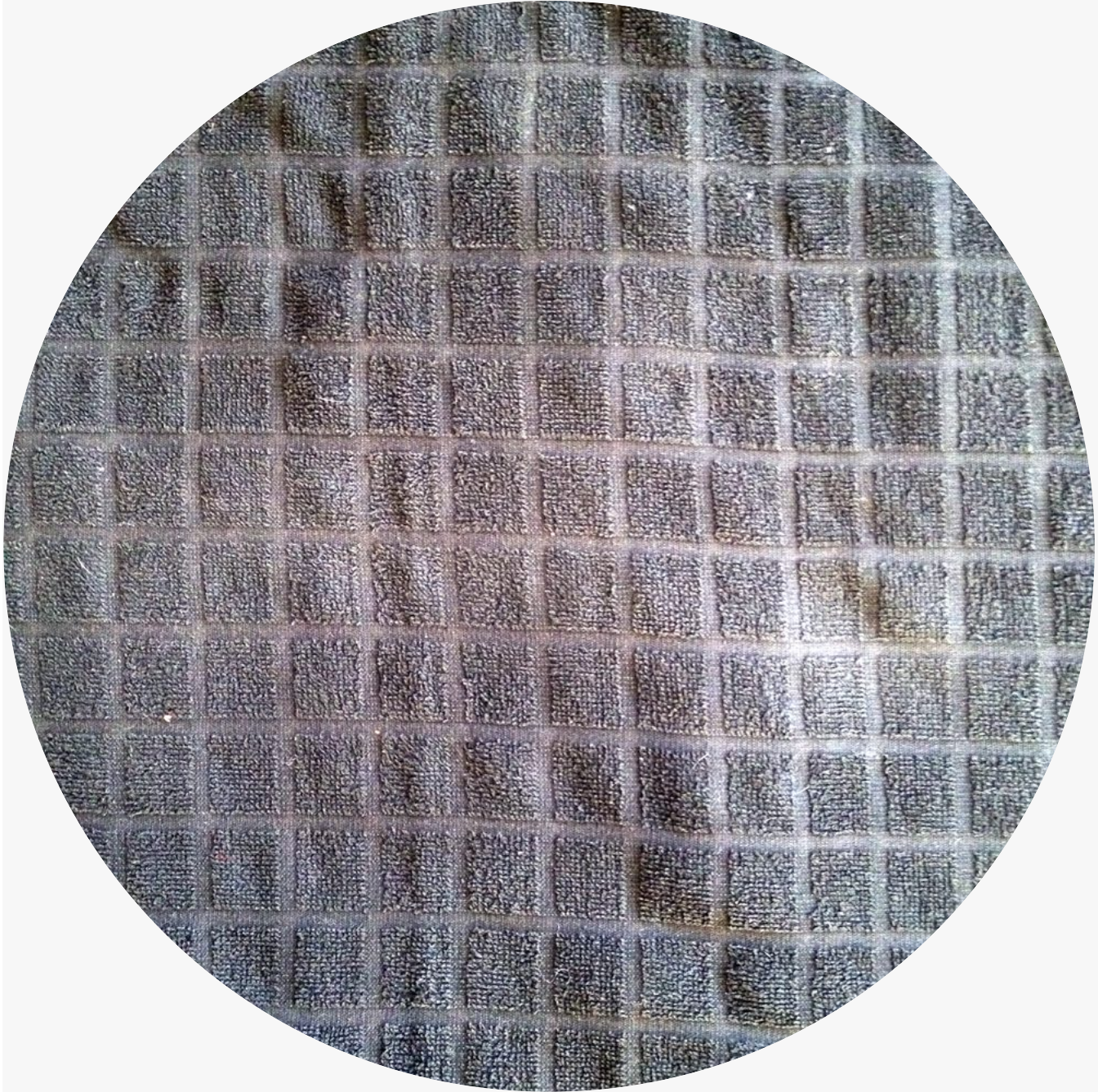
Gothenburg, February 2011.

3.

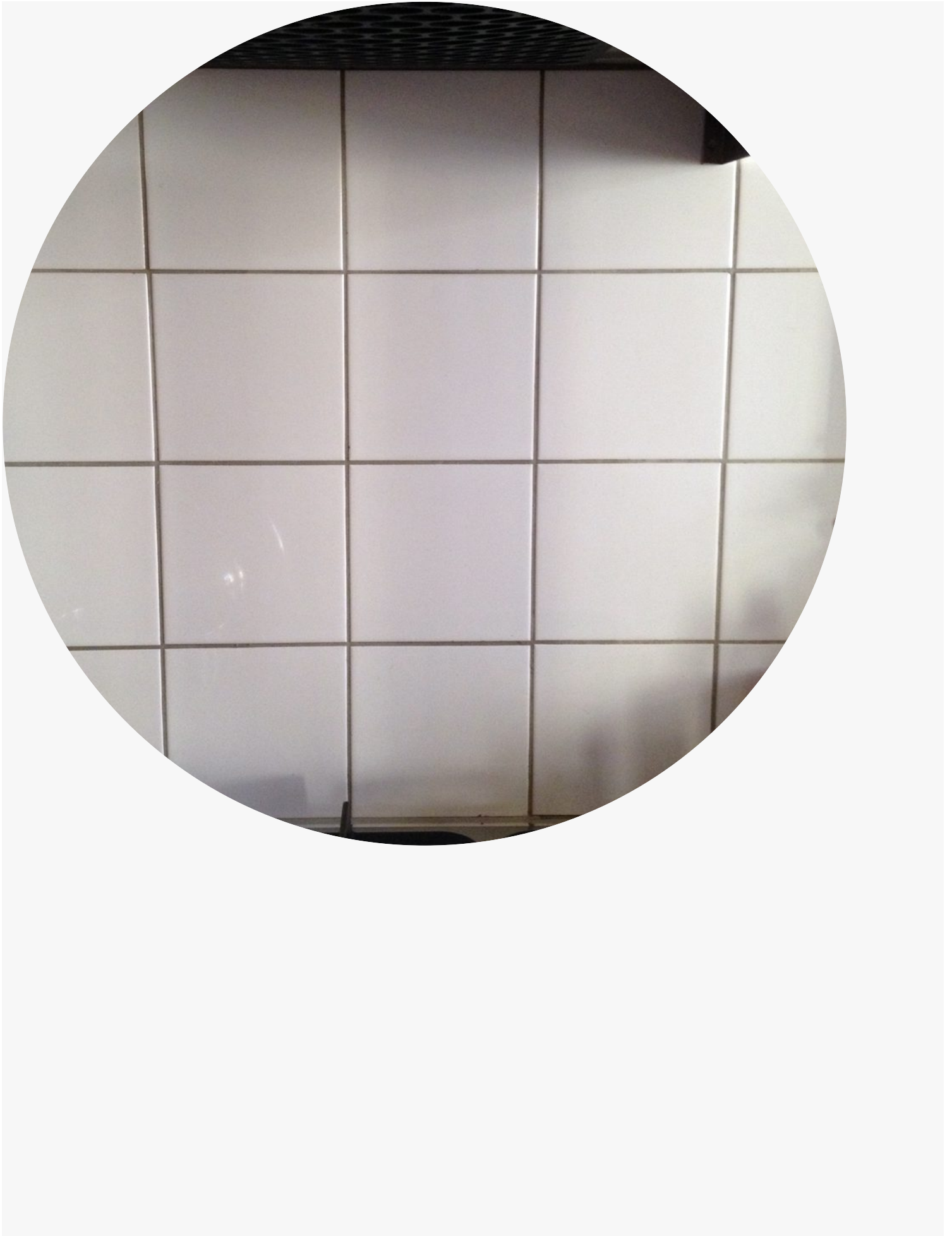
One thing that unites my approach with that of Carina Reich and Bogdan Szyber in their project *Persondesign* (which I describe in further detail in chapter 2) is a sense of shame and guilt in the face of the begging person. On their project website they describe this as one of the driving forces behind their project.¹¹⁾ There is a socio-economic imbalance to projects like ours, in which a privileged artist backed by taxpayer money stages an interactive situation with someone who lacks those same privileges. A situation in which one party doesn't, or can just barely, participate in the discussion in the exhibition space (whether that is a blog, or a white cube, or some other space). There is a "we" in both our investigations that poses questions about a problem that lies partially outside the body but is also "felt in the body" and not just as a feeling, but also physically, in terms of positions. I call this my social physicality. Phenomenologist Sara Ahmed describes how this can be expressed in one's body: "The very physicality of shame – how it works on and through bodies – means that shame also involves the de-forming and re-forming of bodily and social spaces, as bodies 'turn away' from the others who witness the shame."¹²⁾ This "we" is part of the same system and both projects frame the questions in similar ways. One might say that we have the same framework – the political discourse in Sweden. And that our reactions to *Vinterhed*, as well as our actions, are similar. Sara Ahmed writes how shame can feel like being exposed while also trying to hide, to cover up the act. It's like being watched while failing, becoming visible when one isn't ready to be revealed. "To be witnessed in one's failure is to be ashamed: to have one's shame witnessed is even more shaming. The bind of shame is that it is intensified by being seen by others as shame."¹³⁾ These feelings can be triggered in a giving-to-the-begging situation. I am a participant in the prevailing economic system, as a subject I am active to some degree in the system that causes

poverty. The authors of the article "The EU Migrant Debate as Ideology" describe how an economic system – such as the Swedish welfare state – gives rise to a moral economy.¹⁴⁾ They refer to the idea of debt playing a central role in the abstract political community.¹⁵⁾ It's a reaction. Sara Ahmed writes: "So when we recognize ourselves as shamed, that self-identification involves a different relationship of self to self and self to others from the recognition of ourselves as guilty".¹⁶⁾ Both the authors of the article, Örestig, Bäckström, and Persson, as well as Sara Ahmed note that the reaction can be expressed so that the experienced shame is deflected – in defense of the unpleasant feelings it provokes: "In shame the subject may have nowhere to turn."¹⁷⁾ Örestig, Bäckström, and Persson describe it as follows: "However, there is also a more fundamental and underlying problem in the logic of reciprocity, which is revealed when someone 'fails' to live up to expectations, or is accused of refusing to do so. Then the expectations of reciprocity are quickly transformed into a debt – which gives the 'creditor' a potential position of power."¹⁸⁾

But Sara Ahmed finds an opening; while guilt refers to wrong-doing, shame can lead to an intimate relationship with myself, shame is questioned by shame: "I may be shamed by somebody, somebody whose view 'matters' to me. As a result, shame is not a purely negative relation to another: shame is ambivalent."¹⁹⁾ To feel shame and guilt may also be a way of not accepting the state of things and letting it prompt one to stage the questions one has. *Vinterhed* does this by writing, Reich & Szyber by their participatory performance and I do it by posing my questions about what images the begging face as they beg, and what images the giving face when they give.²⁰⁾ A new configuration is slowly taking shape in me. What images create this powerlessness?









4.

I don't know who you are. Through my acts I display an image of myself, but the image doesn't resemble me. I bend over, no my body bends over, toward you, I don't really want to, I want you to stand up to that which has trodden you down. A structure is speaking through me, owns a part of me, rules my body.


The structure or matrix emerges in the image due to the actions of those who beg. I see various grid patterns around me.

The relation between the spatial and the social situation isn't temporary. Our transaction on the streets, in the cities, isn't temporary – it follows spatial and social patterns.

How can so many bodies be sitting on the city streets? Some are begging, others plead, some sing, some seem to just sit there with a cup in front of them. What political interests bind the body in such a position, the many bodies in many different variations of positions: sitting, kneeling, not upright in the climate of the street, the environment that plays a part in how our bodies can move, position themselves, express themselves. I feel addressed by them, but also accused by the matrix that holds bodies in this position.²¹⁾ The invisible bars, horizontal and vertical, that are woven through our bodies and render them powerless. The impoverished bodies don't just exist physically on the streets, but also in the minds of the standing and walking people,

in the language that never dies down – in bodies, through and out. The matrix rules those of us who are upright – and walking – and we move together as a flow, we express ourselves together, like the swarms of bees, we swarm about and around, directed by attractions and desires.

The person lying prostrate on the street when it is five degrees centigrade below freezing, with their hands against the ice-cold ground is not part of the swarm, she stubbornly remains lying there. I can feel her in my body, I don't want to leave. This woman could have been my mother.

Each of us who walk and are upright could step forward, stand next to the prostrate figures and not move. We could stop walking, moving with the flow, we could stay by those who've already been silenced and excluded. While waiting, enduring, would the invisible threads of the matrix lose their elasticity, go slack, collapse? Would that kind of demonstration break the ongoing conversation? Like when a thousand residents of Dharavi, the largest slum in Asia, step out of their homes and block the flow of the city by sitting down and fasting.²²⁾ 

I sent a question to one of my younger friends, a 26-year-old who has done a lot of activist work in Sweden. A question about if those of us with power, us upright people, could stage a quiet, physical, synchronized action of will and power – all the upright bodies in the city placing themselves by the sitting bodies in solidarity. I was curious if she thought this was a viable action. Here's what she answered:

“Hi Cecilia, my first reaction is that it would be a good action. When I think about it further I try to imagine what it would be like to be a begging person and have a whole bunch of other people come and sit next to me. I'm not sure how that would feel. One would have to make clear that this was a protest. The second thing that comes to mind is who the action is directed at, the current linguistics perhaps, how could one dial that in, push it further? I can be a bit square when it comes to checking: a.) What an action does for those one wants to help/whose situation one is protesting/those who suffer the worst consequences of the order one is protesting. b.) What entity the protest is directed at and if it will reach it. So that it doesn't just serve those who are involved in the actual protest (unless that's the point, which it can be at times). Like, how does this jibe with the actual situation and what does it do with the actual situation, what does it leave behind? I also like to ask myself 'What do I, the protester risk?' Very broadly speaking I think the more, the better, but that doesn't necessarily have to be the case. One very palpable thing that one would achieve if one staged a flash mob as described above is that those begging might think one was making fun of them/parodying them/using them for something and that passers-by would think 'Who are these crazy activists/artists' and end up even more blocked and angry. That is a worst-case scenario, but my first reaction, like I said, is that it could be both an interesting and good thing, that if executed 'correctly' could create an opening, or nudge something. Best regards, Karin.”

In other words it could be an intentional action of social bodies in the body politic in order to influence policy, but how and in what direction? How can powerlessness be turned into constructive action?

5.

The beggars themselves already are and display facts on the ground, they are committing a political action, they speak through their silence; through (performative) body language. It is passive resistance; the beggars are expressing a kind of politics of waiting, a forced demonstration. A demonstration that is about and that expresses an ongoing passive *unemployment* activity. A demonstration of an *exclusion that makes visible how a We have excluded a Them*. Their begging is directed at all passers-by, regardless of position of power, skin tone, and gender. It demonstrates to us – who are working or have the option of finding work – and makes us complicit in a suppression, in a policy that has excluded certain people. On her radio show Sara Stridsberg says: “And for one single, vertiginous moment, an entire world order is thrown into question, a person's outstretched hand is very common and negligible. It happens

all the time, everywhere, you forget it, and you can't forget it, the hand.”²³⁾

It's almost as if this demonstration has created a “we”. One feels like one belongs to a different category, one that one might not have previously considered. But I am part of the European body politic, as is the begging person on the street. The begging person is excluded from belonging in various ways: From schooling, work, health care, and other things that should be part of, other things that usually belong in, a social community. Poverty is a political condition and that political condition affects us all. What happens in the streets makes visible the systemic failures of European policy. Inequalities between individual people are upheld by the tension between the system of the individual nation state and the EU.

6.





On August 21, 2013 I pass this woman on Götgatan, as I've done many times before. She is one of those I've previously interviewed with Laura as an interpreter and we greet each other with some familiarity. She has a puppy now. We exchange a few words. I pet the dog and stay for a moment. I ask if

I may photograph her with her dog. She gets up. She wants to show what it's learned. The dog obeys her commands, lies down and is rewarded with praise and a treat.

The hierarchy becomes apparent; she stands up to feed her sitting dog, I stand up and give her money when she is sitting. We, our bodies, how we perform gestures, form patterns. We are images in a pattern that is continually being drawn. Afterward I don't quite know what to do with all the conflicting emotions that this interaction engendered. I go up the attic and paint.²⁴⁾

I need to engage my entire body. The size of the canvas corresponds to my height and the span of my outstretched arms, the movement activates me physically and mentally. I recall how I – many years ago – used to do live figure drawing and it wasn't until I gauged my own body for the position of the model, imitated them physically, that I could draw the model's body. Does live figure drawing develop a capacity for empathy? Perhaps to some extent, but it's less about seeing oneself in the other's body and in their situation, than finding the other's physicality in your own. It doesn't result in a painting of a hierarchical order, of how we figure in a structure, rather it results in a face – something is unique in every individual – her face – but not quite; as rendered by me.



Acrylic 120 cm x 170 cm.

Later, when I look at the painting I see different moods reflected in the face. It has become a nonlinear story told in layers of images – like a film where all the frames are shown at once – when the painting is finished, the film is over, but the painting isn't finished, it continues in the viewer who perceives shifts every time they look at it and all these moments in turn become a film – with no end – a four-dimensional painting.

I continue to paint, every now and then, for a few months. In the dark attic the canvas becomes my only window and also the surface I

project on. I don't paint more faces, instead I paint bodies that bow, pushing, pressing upward or down.

Louise Bourgeois writes that when she creates sculptures she isn't seeking an image, nor is she seeking an idea, her work is about reliving the past and giving it physical shape. With her sculptures she articulates in the present

what she couldn't or wasn't able to do in her past. She often talks about working through past fears. Her work is about exorcism rather than beauty. "Fear is a passive state, and the goal is to be active and take control, to be alive here and today. The move is from the passive to the active [...] since the fears of the past are connected with the functions of the body, they re-appear through the body. For me, sculpture is the body. My body is my sculpture."²⁵⁾ Her words resonate with me. I am surprised by the paintings that emerge, even as I see myself in them, they express my body and my feelings.

I'm always scared of what will happen when the images fall away, the images that shield me. But now they're in my way. When something is taken away, will something else take its place? What?

7.

The blind beggar, who "sees in a way that is all his own"²⁶⁾, is one of the main characters in Arne Dahl's crime novel *Blindbock* [blind-man's-bluff]. He's from Sarajevo, he is one of the Roma that have been purged, now he's been bought by the director of the home to make money begging, he's bought by human traffickers. In the novel there's also a policeman who has a blind son. The blind son helps the father see. The blind person has developed an inner eye, a guiding

eye. In a world bursting with the visual, people develop selective seeing, each person's intuitive eye. We also see each other with that eye. The theologian and former archbishop K. G. Hammar tells me: "In some ways you can be even more aware of someone's presence when you close your eyes. *I can't stand seeing...* you may be far more aware of that person than of others."²⁷⁾

8.

By changing positions, performing gestures that are tied to meanings like representation and power Romanian-Swedish artist Ioana Cojocariu makes visible how the begging person acts according to a social pattern. In the film *Kropp – Erfarenhet – Kunskap* [Body – Experience – Knowledge] Ioana asks a begging woman to teach her how to lie on her knees.²⁸⁾ In a public square she is instructed in how to make sure her legs don't go numb, to not look passers-by in the eyes, and what to think about to pass the time.



Nu får du fundera vad du vill tänka på. Vad gör du i hemmet? Vilken mat skall du laga? Hur har du det med din man? Jo, det är som det är!

"Now consider what you want to think about. What do you do at home? What food should you cook? How are things with your husband? It is what it is!"

Next in the film a yoga teacher instructs her in the same pose. She demonstrates how the same position can be assigned different meaning and value depending on the social situation. In the first case it is a position performed on the street in order to get money, in the other it is a position performed and paid for out of free will. She draws the viewer's attention to how our positions are enmeshed in social contexts and valued accordingly. Which social values are pushing the older woman onto her knees on a snow-covered, cold street? It's violent.

When Ioana demonstrates how the position in one instance is performed as a signal of need and distress, and in the other instance voluntarily as being beneficial to the body – as a yoga pose – she also demonstrates how social bodies express the normative through positions; how they enact the norm.²⁹⁾

In the third part of her film she lets a policeman train her in throwing a threatening person to the ground. Perhaps she wants to show the powerlessness inherent in encountering inequality and not being able to fix it. When she's learned the technique she takes the policeman down – demonstrating empowerment and intent. She has learned how to handle a situation that according to her assessment will require this reaction. To experience inequality can be to experience a crime being perpetrated, meaning that inequality implies a crime – against equality – but there is no police, no guardian of the law, to help fix this crime. The choice then is between powerlessness – social bodies becoming instrumental to a social order – or empowerment.

9.

The question – What pushes the man (in the red jacket in the first photo) onto his knees on a cold street? – is directed at the social context, at the passers-by, as well as at the man himself. George, another one of the begging people gives me an answer. He periodically lives with eight other people in temporary shacks around Sweden. He tells Laura and me how he attempts to handle his existence:

G: We stay here in winter too, what can we do? In Romania we have a house, but we have no work, no social help, the minimum wage is 120 Euro I don't think you can raise 3 kids, have a five-person family on 120 Euro a month. So yes, it is better here, we collect cans. We survive! If any of us has a problem back home, we collect money together, we all help out and we always send money home to our children, to our families.

L: So all your children are in Romania?

G: Of course! You cannot come here with kids and live in a hut. You struggle by yourself, you are a grownup, but why put children through this? And anyway, here the social workers will pick them up immediately. You cannot raise children under these conditions.

L: Did you try to get help?

G: I went to T-Centralen to ask, handed in my ID-card, all my papers, filled in the papers, and they told me to wait for their call. It's been five months since then... I also applied at the Solna immigration center, to get an address and work, I went there together with a woman from the Skanstull center, she spoke for me in Swedish, filled in her address on the papers, and... nothing happened. No call. It's difficult.³⁰⁾

George testifies to structural violence. How can I hear George? I have no personal experience of what he's gone through. What binds us as social bodies? Michael Azar, professor of intellectual history, writes about the risks of domesticating the potentially unknown by subsuming it into an existing discursive order. "For instance, in a discourse built on strict dichotomies – sense or sensibility,

good or evil, civilized or barbarian, freedom fighter or terrorist etc. – every occurrence will be singled out as being one or the other. No third alternative is given."³¹⁾ The third is "something inter-subjective that inserts itself between the subject and the being", this third is the discourse that is the foundation for whether we can see and understand things the same way. "We don't have an experience and then understand the meaning of it, they happen at the same time."³²⁾ Michael Azar claims: "That is where the experience lacks a name – that it becomes mute, it mutes her and makes her search for words."³³⁾ *I can't stand it!* Vinterhed exclaims, groping for a frame of reference – that doesn't exist – in the common language.³⁴⁾ How does one testify to that for which there is no words? Sara Ahmed wants to show how actions are *reactions*, in the sense that what we do is shaped by our contact with one another.³⁵⁾ Ahmed builds her theory on French sociologist and philosopher Émile Durkheim among others. For Durkheim emotions do not emanate from the individual body, rather they are what keeps together, or binds, social bodies.³⁶⁾ Emotions are also created by something, are oriented around something, involve a stance "on the world" or a way of grasping "the world".³⁷⁾ Ahmed describes emotions as movements in which bodies orient toward each other, as well as away from each other. Emotions could be described as a power, or a tension between social bodies in community life. An increasing number of testimonies are given in this tension. George's story is also a story about pain. A testimony of pain that we must take personally. But not even those closest to us can feel our pain. If I break my leg and you hear my pain, but you've never experienced a broken leg first hand, you can't know what it feels like. You can listen to what I say, or perhaps rather to how I express myself. Because emotions are created in the presence of another, they shape us and also shape that which we are in the presence of.³⁸⁾ A testimony can be understood by another person the same way the impossible can be understood. Sara Ahmed expresses it thus: "Our task is instead to learn how to hear what is impossible."³⁹⁾

4.2 About *Body on Street*

1.

I want to make images of what I as a giver sense physically – that begging challenges giving. In a conversation with Kent Sjöström, theatre arts researcher, he asks me to show him how I move in relation to those who beg. *When do the gestures of the body begin to signify that which isn't said?* He then shows me his association – as a physical expression – a position he demonstrates on the street; he lies down in a sort of impossible position – it's not possible to lie that way for very long, it's uncomfortable and vulnerable – and I photograph him. This soon evolves into an idea of involving more people: What would others do? I imagine it might become a photo demonstration on social media. This is how *Body on Street* begins.



Kent Sjöström, University Lecturer, Ph.D. Theatre Arts, Malmö Theatre Academy.

The next day I show the photo to a friend and tell him about the conversation. He wants to participate too.



Torben Eskildsen, Choir Director, Copenhagen.

2.

I experience a distance, almost a gulf, between me and those who beg. Overall, it feels like the atmosphere on the street has changed in recent years; something has happened to the social climate that feels substantial, difficult to pin down. Is it solidarity, the ability to be touched? The project aims to make tangible and give shape to a question that is as common as it is impossible to answer: "How does it feel?"

Body on Street began in January 2013, and has been staged in various places and contexts across Sweden. A workshop is held with local people in conjunction to the exhibition, the photos generated in the workshop then become part of the exhibition. Participants are invited via email or notices in newspapers. Participation is free.

In the workshop participants think and associate in images and gestures, on

the distance between those who beg and those who give on the streets; political realities that are made visible daily in the Europe of free movement and migration. After the workshop, the photo is published on a project website.⁴⁰⁾

The street is a political arena. The effects of the prevailing policy become visible on the street, but street life also affects policy. My physical actions affect the choreography of the street. Mentally I become my body when I perform the position but in the position I am not just my physical body, I am also the one making my body perform the position, I act and I will be seen a certain way.

Body on Street is performed and presented in three types of spaces: On the streets, in art venues, and social media. Under each photograph is the name of the participant, their title, institution and city, in order to announce the identity of the person performing, and what he or she represents in the community.⁴¹⁾

3.

Every *Body on Street* workshop is unique, but they all have in common that we investigate together *at what point the gestures of the body start to signify that which isn't said*, and *social body* in relation to *body politic*.

The participants are asked to share a story about an experience, an encounter or a shortcoming, an exchange, or perhaps the opposite, with a begging person. The following is an example of mine:

I'm by the ATM, withdrawing money, when an older woman who is sitting and begging reaches her hand toward me, she wants to take

my hand and greet me. My stance is reserved, guarded, but I take it, she raises our hands toward her forehead, I resist, she doesn't ask for my consent, it feels shameless, boundaryless. I put my hand in my pocket, feel my coins – I'm embarrassed – I drop the coins into her mug. She thanks me.

I ask them to describe how giving feels to them, mentally, what gesture they made and how that can be expressed. Next I ask them to show their conversation partner how they moved in relation to the begging person and to develop a special gesture they made, did they position themselves, take a certain stance? Then I ask each person to hold a feeling, a gesture, and a posture that they've found and not try to correct it or free themselves of it. We do a focus exercise that I call *social presence*, it's about feeling connected to a social group – while

still holding onto that frame of mind or feeling. The purpose of the exercise is to relate to one's surroundings on the street – in a physical and sensory way. The individual feeling is connected to a social body in the urban landscape that in turn is part of a body politic.⁴²⁾

Liminal areas in community life are charged with emotion. Tensions that boil over, outside, on the side of – is all of this a product of the prevailing system? Now, I'm the one charging and expressing.

Their performative acts are then staged in the public space and documented. The improvisations on the street are quick, the whole thing requires maintaining a certain pace and I try to see to it that we do. I don't want the participants to spend too much time discussing what they're doing, if one thinks and talks too much about the gesture one is about to perform, the physical presence is easily lost and one risks self-censoring – I can't do this, can I... But if a conversation emerges about how to develop the improvisation I'll slow the pace down, I'll listen to what is happening within the group and lead it. At one point I noticed that the entire group wanted to act together and then I directed them in performing this position.

4.

Am I performing myself? No. In the act of addressing you – the viewer – I try to transcend my limitations, become dependent on your answer, and when I do, a new image arises, made by us.

Together with the participants, I want to access a kind of creative act that doesn't describe, but rather affects the environment in which it's performed. I don't want the participants to say: "I'm going to lay down on the street as a spectacle for your camera." Nor should *Body on Street* be understood as a performance documented with a still camera. It is about finding a movement in a subjective experience, a mental and physical experience of a social situation, to perform it in a new environment, and create a new image. Within the community of the group the body is destabilized, we can work with the social norms that we express physically – the social uncertainty generated by this begging that is relatively new to Sweden. What does a physical expression of *lack of results* or *powerlessness* look like? Peggy Phelan writes: "The performance uses the performer's body to pose a question about the inability to secure the relation between subjectivity and the body *per se*; performance uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body – that which cannot appear without a supplement."⁴³⁾ The participants in *Body on Street* explore the space they inhabit and how their bodies speak with it. When some of the participants want to act together, they examine their positions by balancing their bodies in relation to each other.⁴⁴⁾ The audience is the people who happen to pass by during the performance.

Through the act of giving in relation to the person begging we reflect and examine the experience of being human in relation to another human. Giving is composed of a variety of intentions, desires, and emotions. Each person has their own specific composition. But each person is also an actor within a social body and performs giving and begging as a transaction within a system. The situation might be termed a spectacle – *La Société du Spectacle* to use Guy Debord's title.⁴⁵⁾ The artist and theoretician Bojana Cvejic describes the close link between performance, image, and representation: "In my imaginary exercise of a theoretical pamphlet in 2015 Debord would be ready to substitute 'performance' for 'image' and 'representation'. A ritualized motion based on the psycho-social power of embodiment provides the affective-experiential ground of persuasive expression for the performances of the self."⁴⁶⁾ *Body on Street* is a participatory performance about staging and testing the power of the affective physical movement in a social environment to *activate images that exist between us, actualize them, and possibly generate new ones.*

Streets are urban forms for urban life. I leave one place and am on my way to another. I cruise past others, stop, become part of a line, wait for a while, continue on in the city. Leaning forward slightly, in stand-by mode, selectively vigilant. The street absorbs me into a social body, a mass of people, the mass moves, not me. The mass takes shape through quiet negotiations, I behave, conduct myself. I am neither seen, nor unseen.

5.

In Walter Benjamin's interpretation of Brecht, the philosopher seems to imply that the position situated in a flow of behaviors – were it to be isolated – can be identified as an element of a real condition, that it can surprise the viewer precisely because it is a familiar position, but also distance itself from the flow. "The interrupting of action is one of the principal concerns of epic theatre."⁴⁷⁾

I see and perceive your compulsion, your lack of freedom, that is why I lie down – in tension – on the street. Straight out and right across. I'm blocking the pedestrian paths with my prostrate body, interrupting the flow of the mass.

The invitation reads: "When I perform a gesture I'm not just my physical body, I'm also a cerebral body. My actions and how I take shape affects patterns in the choreographies of the street." The staged act becomes a new experience in the urban landscape, breaking with one's own behavior can bring insight into one's own position, insight into who one is in a social context, *to unframe the framed*.

"The supreme task of an epic production is to give expression to the relationship between the action being staged and everything that is involved in the act of staging *per se*."⁴⁸⁾ This is according to Walter Benjamin. The position expressed by the participants in *Body on Street* lasts for a few short minutes. It might be reminiscent of Brecht's way of freezing a movement into another in order to give the viewer the opportunity to consider how we behave *to*

each other – whether one behaves against or with the other, the movement happens *in relation to*. The room is framed by the photo.

The actor in *Body on Street* performs their gesture for the group and is also aware that this is about performing a gesture for the camera – they are seen. The camera is the public eye that is an otherwise constant presence on the street, the eye of the public. Brecht's actors weren't supposed to "lose [themselves] in the character but rather demonstrate the characters as a function of particular socio-historical relations, a conduit of particular choices"⁴⁹⁾ When the performed act in *Body on Street*, the photographed gesture, is shown together with a number of other people's gestures, the behavioral break appears more markedly as a common movement – a counter movement – as a demonstration. That is why I call *Body on Street* a "photo demonstration".

In 1928 Brecht staged the musical *The Threepenny Opera*, a politically confrontational, documentary theatre that challenges conventional morals.⁵⁰⁾ It's not just an opera about beggars it is also "the beggar's opera". This epic theatre continues to be influential, but in order for it to be a contemporary political act it must continuously be rephrased.⁵¹⁾ If a human is only the sum of their social conditions, if the private is incorporated into a social body and set up in relation to a body politic, they risk becoming instrumental for the purposes of the body politic. Or as Brecht put it, they become material.

6.

Author and playwright Sara Stridsberg describes her experience: "If you don't give anything you are saying that you accept the prevailing order, the boundary between rich and poor, between the person who seeks help (let us call her the stranger) and yourself. If you choose to give a penny, it always has a larger value than the financial transaction. Regardless. You go on your way through the city with questions like dark claws in your chest [...]"⁵²⁾

When the participants assume a position on the street in front of the rest of the group and my camera it is similar to the way of acting that Brecht terms *gestus*. The term *gestus* is relevant in *Body on Street* as the person physically

performing their gesture at the same time expresses an attitude that relates to the social position of those who beg. The actors assume a position on the street that they never would if they weren't being photographed by me. They give me both their image and their permission – their confidence that I can administer said image. When they give me their image in this manner they destabilize their position. This is about what I previously described in my method and intent as a way of destroying the own image of the image; the imagined image (a prevailing, normative image, a cultural image).⁵³⁾

7.

Each person's motivations, commitment, and actions express a stance, a *haltung* (disposition). By this Brecht didn't just mean mental attitude, but also the concrete physical posture. In his thesis, researcher Kent Sjöström discusses how physical and mental attitude affect each other: "In order to complete a task the body must adjust to the prevailing conditions. If the actions describe *what*

a person does, the *adaptation* to the task also describes *how* the action is performed."⁵⁴⁾ The pleading stance of the beggar and the downward dip of the giver are both socially conditioned actions. They constitute (physical) stances that carry meanings.

8.

The distance between the begging and the giving can be seen and felt on the street, the way givers and beggars relate is often expressed through distancing gestures. It isn't merely a transaction – *I look at you, perhaps approach you, change my position in terms of distance and height, negotiate the physical space with you, our space* – between us.


In *Body on Street* the distancing doesn't make visible a dialectical relationship, but a new social space – evident since around 2011 due to the begging people who traveled here – in which various emotions

are set into motion, where the relationship needs to be re-negotiated. The space can be seen as a liminal one, where images I already have prevent me from seeing and where I must find other ways of relating in order to create new images. The physical act in *Body on Street* is a way to think through and with the body – to “exercise” the images. *Body on Street* portrays a sort of *verfremdungseffekt* that intends to hold a space for the viewer to interpret and think over *how* the urban landscape feels.⁵⁵⁾

Chapter 4: Staged Work (a photo manifestation)

Body on Street

Chapter 4: Gestures
Notes

1.  “For Aristotle the soul designates the actualization of matter, where matter is understood as fully potential and unactualized”. Judith Butler interprets Aristotle’s *De Anima* in her book *Bodies that Matter*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 32.

The body is matter. Butler claims that matter doesn’t appear without the schematic: form, shape, expression, and syllogism. The body appears in a certain grammatical form within a discourse of power throughout history.

2. 📖 Kent Sjöström, *Skådespelaren i handling; strategier för tanke och kropp*, (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2007), 151.
3. 📖 Kerstin Vinterhed, “Var finns ambitionen att hjälpa Stockholms tiggare?” *Dagens Nyheter*, February 14, 2013. Accessed April 27, 2016, dn.se/debatt/stockholmsdebatt/var-finns-ambitionen-att-hjalpa-stockholms-tiggare.
4. 📖 A matrix is a template that produces structures (patterns, content, meanings beyond the overt message, actions, incidents, and other human contexts). But what kind of template is this? In a world that has experienced the nuclear bomb, the growing gap between the developing world and the industrialized world, environmental destruction, and the dumbing down of the capitalist industry of consciousness there are discussions about how knowledge is produced, so writes Sven-Eric Liedman, who studies the history of ideas and he stresses: “For Marx it is obvious that the large shifts have to do with conditions that lie beyond human consciousness. Consciousness doesn’t create history. In relation to the greater processes, individuals, with their calculations and schemes, are coincidences [...] History flows through our lives. The currents are below the surface.” Sven-Eric Liedman, *Humanistiska forskningsstraditioner i Sverige*, (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1978), 48–54.
5. 📖 “Since my aim is to ask about the relationship between what tragedy shows and what we find intuitively acceptable”. Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness, (Aeschylus and practical conflict)*, (New York: Cambridge University press, 1986), 26.
6. 📖 “Art will mediate and adorn, and develop magical structures to conceal the absence of God or his distance. We live now amid the collapse of many such structures, and as religion and metaphysics in the West withdraw from the embraces of art, we are it might seem being forced to become mystics through the lack of any imagery which could satisfy the mind.” Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 88.
7. 📖 *Ibid.*, 79.
8. 📖 Quoted from a seminar with philosopher Tore Nordenstam and Ingela Josefsson, professor of Working Life studies, in the course Kunskapsfilosofi 2, DI, Stockholm, March 22, 2013.
9. 📖 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 184.
10. 📖 “Sara Stridsberg”, Sommar i P1, Sveriges Radio, July 21, 2011. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/126264?programid=2071. Stridsberg emailed me the quote and I am using it here with her permission.
11. 📖 “Beggars Saturday & Persondesign”. Accessed April 4, 2016, <http://reich-szyber.com/en/portfolio/beggars-saturday-persondesign/>.
12. 📖 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, second edition, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 103.
13. 📖 *Ibid.*, 103.
14. 📖 Bäckström, Örestig, Persson, 3. “The moral economy signals that the key to social rights is and should be citizenship and labour market participation.”
15. 📖 Bäckström, Örestig, Persson, 4. A theory that they credit to American political scientist Kathleen Arnold, *Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004).
- 16, 19. 📖 Ahmed, 105.
17. 📖 *Ibid.*, 104.
18. 📖 Bäckström, Örestig, Persson, 4.
20. 📖 See further reasoning regarding hierarchies of power in [chapter 5.1](#): “Private Business, Public Space”, paragraph 5.
21. 📖 “Rather, we find ourselves born into communities in which the available ways of acting are largely laid out in advance: in which human activity takes on different [...] ‘forms of life’ [...] and our obligations are shaped by the requirements of those forms.” Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, (New York: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 23.
22. 📖 “Dharavi Residents Stage Anti-Government Protest”, *DNA India*, June 12, 2012. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-dharavi-residents-stage-anti-govt-protest-1701162.
23. 📖 Stridsberg, www.sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/126264?programid=2071.
24. 📖 My educational background is in painting, I studied for two years at the Hovedskous art school in Gothenburg, where we did live figure drawing every day. After that I was accepted at Valand Academy where I studied from 1986 to 1991, but I haven’t painted much since then, only during periods when I need to work through experiences, or remember, or when it is the most relevant production technique in a certain project.
25. 📖 Louise, Bourgeois, *Deconstruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father*, (London: Violette Editions, 1998), 357.
26. 📖 Arne Dahl, *Blindbock*, audiobook, (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 2013).
27. 📖 K. G. Hammar and I spoke about begging people in Lund November 21, 2013.
28. 📖 Artist Ioana Cojocariu filmed *Kropp – Erfarenhet – Kunskap* in 2013. The starting point is a pedagogical situation in which the teacher – a woman who is begging on the street in Sweden – instructs and the apprentice – artist Ioana Cojocariu – performs.

“Lesson # 1, one is instructed to look to the side, but to never look up. Lesson # 2, one is instructed to breathe, lift ones chest and look straight ahead. Lesson # 3, one is instructed to quickly neutralize the opponent, be decisive and never apologize. Can one understand the structure if one follows the instructions? What constitutes bodily knowledge in different forms of work? What is the relationship between economy, pain, and relaxation? Has the private become economic, rather than being political?”

“Kropp – Erfarenhet – Kunskap”. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.verkligheten.net/2014/11/kropp-erfarenhet-kunskap/.

29. 🗣️ One example would be to sit with one’s legs crossed, which some cultures regard as the default position during mealtime, and others think of as a yoga pose.
30. 🗣️ The audio recording is transcribed by interpreter Laura Chifiriuc and is partially reproduced here. The full transcript can be found in [the archives](#).
31. 🗣️ Michael Azar, *Vittnet*, (Gothenburg: Glänta, 2008), 46.
32. 🗣️ *Ibid.*, 45.
33. 🗣️ *Ibid.*, 43. The quote is preceded by: “[...] how can the witness know what an intelligible testimony regarding a certain experience is if she doesn’t already know how ‘one’ should interpret the experience? Rather perhaps we must [...] imagine how the names are already more or less given to her and that these are what designate the shaping of the experience.”
34. 🗣️ Azar, 43. “It’s not the subject on one hand and the object on the other: Rather it is the discourse that designates how the relationship between the two will be experienced and lived.” p. 43.
35. 🗣️ Ahmed, 6.
36. 🗣️ Ahmed, 9. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* Sara Ahmed joins the sociologists and anthropologists who claim that emotions – rather than being seen as psychological states – can be seen as social and cultural practices. She describes Durkheim’s reasoning on how individual ideas and tendencies come to us “from without”. Durkheim argues that sociology is about “recognizing constraint”. “Most of our ideas and our tendencies are not developed by ourselves but come to us from without.” (*The Rules of Sociological Method*, (New York: Free Press, 1966), 4.) He presents a theory on emotion as a social form and presents the example of large gatherings of people generating emotions that don’t tie in to individual “self-expression” (compare to *swarm theories*).
37. 🗣️ *Ibid.*, 7. “Emotions are intentional in the sense that they are ‘about’ something: they involve a direction or orientation towards an object (Parkinson 1995: 8). The ‘aboutness’ of emotions means they involve a stance on the world, or a way of apprehending the world.”
38. 🗣️ *Ibid.*, 7.
39. 🗣️ *Ibid.*, 35.
40. 🗣️ The photo demonstration began in November 2013. The photos have been mediated through a special website and tied in to previous and future improvisations with a growing number of participants, *Body on Street* is still ongoing as we write. You can find photos as well as a short text about the idea here: “Body on Street”. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.ceciliaparsberg.tumblr.com.
41. 🗣️ A selection of the photographs from *Body on Street* – about 25 of them – have been shown as a series in several exhibitions 2014–16. See “Documentation”. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.ceciliaparsberg.se/how-do-you-become-a-successful-beggar-in-sweden.
42. 🗣️ The exercise is done standing, in a circle. I improvise the exercise, it goes something like this:
Take a few deep breaths and feel your body. If you perform this exercise with your eyes closed, or half closed, you will find it easier to focus. (15 seconds)
—Feel your feeling, your experience of your interaction with a begging person in the experience you just told us about. Can you picture how you moved in relation to one another? Your body remembers the movement. (10 seconds)
—Physical posture is influenced by intention. Feel your intention. (10 seconds)
—Hold the course of events, feelings, and intention for the entire exercise, even if they are vague, try to stay with them. (10 seconds)
—Stay where you are and sketch – by visualizing – a movement and a position for yourself. (20 seconds)
—Feel the presence of your neighbors to your left and to your right. Make light contact with them, touch each other. (15 seconds) Your body is a social body.
—Feel your surroundings, the environment you’re in and feel the social body. We are a part of community life, an ongoing life in society, with our own feeling, our social physicality that can make contact with others. Take a few deep breaths at your own pace and feel all these physical and mental dimensions at once. If you’re feeling stiff you can shake your body out. (10 seconds)
—Open your eyes, tell your neighbor what you felt, what thoughts you have. (10 minutes)
—Change partners and tell someone else. (5 minutes)
—Change partners again and tell each other without words. Hold your hands up in front of you, put your fingers against the other person’s and narrate with movement.

- Choose a place on the street to perform your gesture or position, alone, in couples, or more. Together in our social group we won't censor anything, but we relate to what's going and to others on the street.
43. 📖 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 151.
 44. 📖 See [photos](#) of balancing acts at Medborgarplatsen, Stockholm and others by Korsvägen, Gothenburg.
 45. 📖 Sven-Erik Liedman prefers the original French title to the Swedish *Skådespelssamhället* and writes: "Debord links society as spectacle to the evolution of Capitalism and claims that humans in such a society suffer from incurable alienation. In the spectacle Debord sees denial of real life. All of existence is void of content and the only compensation offered are the spectacle's twisted images of a sustainable community between people, meaningful work, and a healthy sense of self." Sven-Erik Liedman, *Stenarna i själen: Form och materia från antiken till idag*, (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 2006), 401. Guy Debord wrote his book in 1967, he was a driving force in the Situationist art movement, which I find topical again, especially in the context of begging-giving and the narratives that emerge about how both the begging and the giving experience the situation. (See [chapter 2](#).)
 46. 📖 The quote is from her lecture at "TRANSLATE, INTERTWINE, TRANSGRESS!", a symposium between choreography, philosophy, art, and poetry, with lectures, plays, and parties at the Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm and MDT. June 11–13, 2015 Stockholm.
 47. 📖 Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre?", *Understanding Brecht*, transl. Anna Bostock, (New York: Verso 1998), 19.
 48. 📖 Ibid. 11.
 49. 📖 Elin Diamond, *Unmaking, Mimesis*, (New York: Routledge, 1997).
 50. 📖 In 1934 he published the Marxist, anti-Capitalist short story. It has been translated into 18 languages and staged more than 10,000 times on stages across Europe.
 51. 📖 One is example is the Spanish artist Dora García staging *The Beggar's Opera* in Munster in 2007, a performance she calls a "Theatrical production in real time and in public space with no clear beginning or end" <http://thebeggarsopera.org>.
 52. 📖 "Sara Stridsberg", Sommar i P1, Sveriges Radio, July 21, 2011. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/126264?programid=2071. I've had the quote mailed to me by her and am using it with her permission.
 53. 📖 The process of staging *Body on Street* follows my methodological intent described in greater detail in the Introduction.
 54. 📖 Kent Sjöström, *Skådespelaren i handling*, (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2007), 119, 236.
 55. 📖 In the journal *Konstperspektiv* Bo Borg writes of *Body on Street*: "One of the image series, *Body on Street* stands out from the rest. It depicts staged arrangements done together with giving people. People lie on the street in a manner that would be extreme even among the begging. They become social sculptures that highlight the indifference of the passers-by and the fact that the urban landscape has changed. This type of photo has been taken in different places and will also be staged in Skövde." Bo Borg, "Cecilia Parsberg's utställning i Skövde Konsthall 7/3–22/5", *Konstperspektiv* No. 2 (2015).

Cecilia
Parsberg

Search:

Chapter (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9)

Art and the Political – A Movement Inward and Outward

5.1 Private Business, Public Space

5.2 To Be Free of an Image

5.3 Giving in Free Movement Europe

Notes

Staged
Work {

}

5.1 Private Business, Public Space

1.

My view can open me: *I see them! If I can only see myself in them, then let me encounter the stranger in me. If this is true for me, maybe it is for you too?*

Once again I want to engage in dialogue, make contact, and film. I decide to approach the begging people where they sit. It's July 2013 and with Laura as an interpreter I film everybody who is begging on Götgatan in Stockholm. From one end of the long street to the other, from Slussen to Skanstull – where I live – we find twelve people begging: eleven Romanians and one Swede, who'll speak to us. We also approach two people who won't speak to us, who raise their hand when they see my camera and refuse, even after Laura explains our project to them. I've given Laura the following questions:

- How is business? Do you get any money?
- Is there anything special that makes people give more? (Like – do you talk to them, look at them, do you sit or stand, choose a particular place?)
- Do you know anyone who gets enough money?
- Do you know anyone who gets a lot of money?
- What makes her or him get money?
- Do you think begging could be considered a job?
- If so, in what way?
- If no, why not?

- Do you think that there are beggars who consider it business like any other business?
- Do you think it would be better that way?
- Would it be possible to have a business plan for a beggar?
- What's your name?

I crouch in front of Laura to record the begging person. I have instructed Laura to keep to the questions and to translate the answers for me as they come. But it turns out that she can't or doesn't want to interrupt the conversation that moves intermittently between the reason they're here, their homes in Romania, their life stories, and current occupation. I balance the camera on my knees and prepare for an interaction between the three of us, but soon find myself on the outside, isolated behind a lens as I try to interpret tones of voice and gestures. I view the begging person and Laura through the lens, frame them in regards to light, color, and surroundings. I depict.

There was no encounter with the begging. Laura was deeply shaken after the conversations, needed a cigarette, to stand and breathe for a while before she could give me a recap of what had been said. I didn't make contact with them, nor was I in control of questions and answers. I'm still working through that material to find some answers.

2.

Laura visits my apartment a week later. These conversations have made me reconsider, she says and continues to describe her image of these people when she lived in Romania. When she first saw them here she dismissed them, but now that they've spoken with each other she is "touched" – she and I speak English with each other. She wants to continue, she wants to know more. On the subway, on our way out to Högdalen, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Stockholm, she tells me that she understands their codes, both things that they say and their gestures. This time we have other questions. After a greeting ceremony and an exchange of cigarettes Laura starts talking with them. This time she translates directly to me. I can't film, but we get to record the sound. I hold the camera under my arm with the lens pointed down.

Laura: What do you think a Swedish person needs to understand about your situation, why is this happening?

George: I tell you what's happening – people tend to follow each other like sheep. For example, I used to know some guys, they went to France with 60 Euro in their pocket (the plane ticket), they stayed there for two weeks, whatever they were doing, they came back home with 320 Euro in their pockets. People see this and what do they think – "Let's go there too, it's better, we could find work,

make some money”... one after another...

L: How did you find this place and make it your home? Did you search for a long time?

[Young man]: We found it quite hard, but it’s a very good spot. We take this path through the forest and get out directly at the train station.

[Woman]: We live in these huts, what can we do...


L: And in winter?

[Group]: The same. Yes.

[Woman]: The rents are too expensive. How could we have that kind of money? We go and beg, the men search for work. They work as day laborers in constructions, pavement...

L: How is it in comparison to Romania?

[Woman]: It’s better. Don’t you know the situation in Romania? It’s become a laughingstock, good for nothing. Some can manage, but three-quarters of the Romanians are gone. In Romania we lost our jobs, we have nowhere to go, no work. You cannot even find hourly work, you could at least work with digging the ground before, at least it was something.

G: Don’t film me, I don’t want to spread rumors in Romania... YouTube... Maybe somebody sent you? ... Actually it would be good for somebody to help us, speak for us, at least to help some of us to go back home, or give us work... I see they give work to others, Arabs for example, Moroccans, they bring them to social centers, give them homes, and us... They hear we’re Romanians – since we have a European visa and can come and leave whenever we want, they don’t give us any chance to get work. They’re very racist with us. Some Swedish people help us by giving us half a Euro or a Euro, something to eat, but it’s hopeless as long as the rest leave us aside, ignore us. 

[...] There’s a social center at Ropsten, if you go there to sleep, or usually I go there to take a shower, you ask if they have spare places and even if they do, you have to wait to be picked up by a sort of lottery system that I don’t understand. So they make me wait, even if I just want to take a shower, and you have to pay 1 Euro anyway. In one day, maybe they have seven free slots, but 50 people are waiting outside to be picked. They want to have as many people as possible lined up on the list, so they can ask for more funding, they’re using us because I don’t see any change, all the time they tell you the same thing – that they only have 21 beds in the whole place... Anyway, a lot of social centers opened but when they hear us talking Romanian they wave their hands at us as if to tell us “you’re waiting for nothing”. It’s difficult to be Romanian. The truth is there was a lot of Romanians before us, that caused a lot of problems, and we are put in the same pot, because we’re Romanians too. Do you think I enjoy living in these conditions? But now I have two children back home, I live in a social home there, don’t have anywhere else to go. The social home is 60 Euro per month and then there’s food. I cannot manage, I manage better being here. I take a shower once a week and go around all week, collecting bottles, I explore places, I beg. Sometimes I feel ashamed to do it, but I have no option really, when I’m thinking

about my family. If I would find a job, I would stop this at an instant, if they would promise me 4... 5... 600 Euro, but to have a place to live, to be able to come home in the evening, take a shower, to live like a human being. [...] I've been staying here during the winter too, making fire in a bucket. I've lived like this for five years now.

L: How did you end up in Sweden?

G: First time I came here, I followed the promise of work from a contact. I only worked for two days for some Englishmen, after that I remained on my own. I worked for two days, so I cannot say I didn't get work... [laughs].

Once I met a young man in Bucharest, he graduated from financial studies, finished two faculties, and he came to Sweden through an address, listened to some rumors about some social help. I told him: "Listen to me, forget about this, you are better off back home, in Bucharest, considering your education and experience, you can find work there if you try" He didn't want to listen to me, telling me there is someone who promised him work. Later I met him another time, he had a big bag of cans, when I looked into it only 20 were good. At one point I wanted to invite him to stay here in our huts with us. I searched for him but he was nowhere to be found...

A lot of us had work back home and lost our jobs. In Romania, if you want to get a place at ADP [city cleaners], the bribe is 100 Euro. And a cleaner earns 150 Euro, the first month you have to work for free, you have a three-month contract, meanwhile if they don't like you, you're out. The ones who pay remain there, but these people have no families and can afford to pay. There was a social center at Zinkensdamm. This guy [referring to a young man next to him] wants to go back home, he doesn't have the money. I take him to the center and they tell him there are no more tickets... If you could help us and go with him, you can talk better than us. He can speak English but they still don't pay attention to him.

L: Can I leave you my phone number to help him with the tickets?

[...] ¹⁾

3.

One day while I'm having lunch with my best friend I suddenly burst into tears. He's surprised and asks why. I try to pinpoint various causes but can't come up with anything that feels true and hits the mark. He doesn't understand and creates his own explanation having to do with X being mean to me. The next day I figure it out, it's about the film recordings I did that week: Encounters with the people begging on Götgatan in Stockholm and in their encampments in Högdalen. The interpreter Laura and I did a lot of interviews, talked to people and tried to understand why they come to Sweden to beg, but above all: How do they envision success and how are they treated? Simply: How is it working out for them? What are they thinking and feeling? How are they acting? What does their existence look like? These recordings affected me deeply and made me look at my own life, made me feel the fear of the unknown, the dirty, the difficult, the miserable. Next to them I appeared incredibly successful, clean,

well dressed – I didn't feel guilt, it was something else, sorrow.

I'm faced with a system that – like most systems, or is it the same system the world over – causes people to resort to begging. The begging person is not what renders me powerless it's not about being faced with the other, that's not the main problem. When there's an outstretched hand I see people give food, clothes, money, cans, gloves, strawberries... Grasping the totality of the situation is what overwhelms me, I can't handle it.

Today I wanted to take her with me – the 25-year-old sitting there with her soft eyes – I want to include her in my society. But then she shows me a photo on her cellphone of her family, her child. I see her home, her context in Romania. I can't "bring her into my society" – she has a home. I give her 50 kronor and leave, damn, damn, damn, fucking politicians – fix it! Why does this situation exist? Perhaps she's the one who should "bring me" into her way of life?



Götgatan, Stockholm 2013.

4.

“Ban the beggars!” A conversation is happening over a couple of glasses of wine, a box of

chocolates and strawberries one evening in August in a garden in Enskede just south of central Stockholm. Ok, but if so, how do we differentiate between begging and asking for help? Does that mean I can be reported for begging if I ask for a favor? What should the moral foundation of our society be? We've entered into a European treaty about a kind of "free" movement. Perhaps one should say: "Free the beggars!" instead. Mainly this is about thousands of begging people who exist in nearly every major city in Europe. It is about duress and about a locked situation that I and many with me are forced to participate in and perpetuate.

Arne Dahl's crime novel *Blindbock* [blind-man's-buff] is about begging in Europe, he has the main character, Hjelm say: "All of this is a sign of the times, we pass the beggars in the subway lightly, since we can ease our conscience by saying that in any case they're controlled by a gang, a mafia... that soon we'll see them in fancy restaurants with cellphones and credit cards, but all of this is an excuse, we've become immune to the suffering of others."²⁾

In the morning paper *Dagens Nyheter* we can read that the beggar Petrina has reported herself a victim of human trafficking but the prosecutor claims that she can't prove that she was deprived of her freedom in any other way than that she is poor, she wasn't subject to force or to threats. She came her of her own free will, she got to keep her passport and was free to move from the camper to her begging spot as well as in and out of the country.³⁾ "For something to be considered trafficking you must be deprived of your freedom",

says Christina Voigt at the international public prosecutor's office. "She is, in a sense, since she is so impoverished. But that is not something you can charge someone else with in court." And if it's not human trafficking, then what is it? "They come here out of pure desperation", says Christina Voigt. "It's not human trafficking, it's an EU problem. Since Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU their citizens have the right to move freely in Europe and many of those who come are very poor and dependent on those who arrange begging, or other activities such as picking berries."⁴⁾ The thing that upsets a lot of people is that begging means not working, not *making an honest living*. How can one make money anyway? In the Swedish edition of *The Human Condition* translator Joachim Retzlaff writes: "Labor, in Arendt's sense of the word, is characterized as a process with no end which is assigned meaning through productivity, but not by the products that are the outcome of the process."⁵⁾ What the beggars are doing is part of process with no end but it lacks apparent meaning because they're not producing anything. And perhaps it is this ongoing apparently endless non-productivity that highlights the meaninglessness of our own existence to us consumers; we work to produce, to get a salary and to be able to

consume – and when we're out of money we need to work more to consume more.

The stated goal of productivity is progress, which has come to be equivalent with success in our society. But what does success look like for different people in their work and personal lives? What has meaning? The new begging also triggers discussions about giving.

5.


Political scientist Bo Rothstein published an op-ed piece in *Dagens Nyheter* on December 28, 2013.⁶⁾ He proposes a new law, a ban on giving to beggars. He is convinced that a “ban on giving to panhandlers would force more comprehensive structural aid into being to assist this vulnerable group.” And he claims that: “a ban must be followed by some form of sanctions if it is to be at all effective, to punish these highly vulnerable, marginalized and obviously distressed people is at odds with our humanity and sense of justice. Yet it must be clear that further charity and continued panhandling can't be the solution to these people's social misery.”

I read the 129 comments on Rothstein's article on the *Dagens Nyheter* website. One of them reads: “The beggar who asks for charity needs this in order to meet their fundamental human needs for the day, such as food. Isn't it a bit harsh to stand by and watch the individual beggar starve, for the simple reason that I as a citizen of means think this the best way to catch the attention of politicians?” (masse: 09:42, December 28, 2013)

Is there any historical basis for necessity forcing justice into being when it comes to poverty? Or is that wishful thinking, an ideological construct? If giving becomes a crime, will society take responsibility for giving, or not? How should the line between philanthropy, solidarity, and welfare be drawn? These seem to be the questions that Rothstein wants to pose, or rather provoke. “One could also view the person who gives to panhandlers as someone who contributes to the social subjugation and humiliation of another person in order to fill some kind of need to feel righteous.” Rothstein wants to discuss giving, how it should work. As an activity begging presupposes a corresponding activity – giving. This is where it gets interesting, but unfortunately Rothstein gets overshadowed in the media, neither the public nor the media are interested in continuing that discussion.

How should the law – if such a proposal were to be enforced in practice – nail down what begging is? A line is drawn here between the giver and the person begging. What happens to individual responsibility for individual actions if the contact between the person giving and the person begging becomes regulated by law? Isn't each person free to choose whom to give to? These lines of inquiry show how complex the situation is.

Further Rothstein writes: “Just as the person who ever so generously pays a sex worker (and perhaps treats them well) is still considered at fault, the person who contributes to the continued social humiliation that panhandling is must also be considered at fault.” When he draws a parallel to the ban

on buying sexual favors, the law that was put in place in 1999, he doesn't seem to distinguish between buying a sexual favor and giving to a begging person. This may seem a bit extreme, but perhaps this question must be asked, the question about the intent of the act of giving: What reasons drive a buyer of sex, what reasons drive one to give to a begging person? 

One must ask whether givers are perpetuating a power structure. It is also imperative to turn that question around and ask if it is possible to break such a power structure. My interviews with the beggars contain descriptions of various treatments from givers. In my conversations with givers they have a lot of feelings concerning the risk of becoming instrumental to a prevailing power structure. The agenda always contains both a structural question as well as a question of the individual's freedom to act. How should they be dependent on each other? Is it ok to ban the individual's choice to give and to help, for the higher purpose of a possible structural change to the system? Arne Dahl lets his EU-parliamentarian Marianne Barrière say: "But I am convinced that we have an inborn sense of justice, we immediately sense if we've done something morally wrong. There is an inner moral compass. [...] Nobody understands what politics are about anymore, since there's no society."⁷⁾



"Giving is a need that is fundamental to our existence."

Susanna Alakoski describes politics as a craft and "democracy [as] a practice anchored in people's daily social life."⁸⁾ She reminds the reader that nobody is poor voluntarily and that poverty is a political condition.⁹⁾ The 28 EU member states have a population of more than 500 million inhabitants. In 2013 Eurostat publishes information indicating that 115 million people are estimated to be *at risk of poverty and social exclusion*.¹⁰⁾ Susanna Alakoski has a formula for how things may go if all responsibility is put on the individual to help their fellow human. "Charity = the state minus responsibility."¹¹⁾

6.

Economist Anna Breman's research shows that giving is a result both of altruistic behavior as well as people feeling good when they share.¹²⁾ Private giving to charity in Sweden increased from 4.8 to 5.8 billion kronor a year from 2008 to 2013 (the statistics only concern bank accounts set up specifically to receive charitable donations so the actual numbers are likely far higher).¹³⁾ "The non-profit sector turned over about 140 billion kronor a year in Sweden and thus constitutes an important part of the national economy."¹⁴⁾ "Economic research on altruism has intensified in later years [...] but scientific study on the logic and practice of giving has been greatly neglected especially when it comes to more innovative and experimental research within the field of economics."¹⁵⁾ This would involve for example finding other ways of giving, examining

and perhaps breaking with existing power structures and not assuming the position of the spectator either on the street or in philanthropic activities. The system must be made visible. But how can this be done?

When Arne Dahl has Marianne Barrière claim that nobody knows what politics are about anymore, since society doesn't exist, he brings concepts like community and solidarity to the fore. If everything is for sale, then why not Roma, why not people in general. Human trafficking, contemporary slavery, hits children the hardest since they're not able to defend their rights. *How do you become a successful beggar in Sweden?* You sell your organs, your body, your sexual favors, for the success that keeping need at bay constitutes.


7.

In his work *Enjoy Poverty*¹⁶⁾ artist Renzo Martens addresses the ways in which the philanthropic industry (nonprofit industry) perpetuates a colonial power structure. He also gives concrete, though ironic, suggestions for how impoverished people can change their situation, how their view and photos of their own situation could become part of the image production that currently lies in the hands of Western interests. Among other things the film shows his attempts to educate photographers in the Congo. His pedagogical attempts fail. In the film the attempts come across as questioning whether those who make money from publishing images really have any interest in changing the prevailing power structure. Martens stages a thesis, but when it comes to image production it seems doubtful that he really is pushing his thesis with, for example, the buyers at media companies and reportage magazines. So Martens isn't very successful in changing the situation of the poor, but he does succeed in showing me and other people in his audience how documentation of others can perpetuate existing

power structures despite the intent to educate; how the Congo is still in a colonial vise; and how complicated philanthropy is, as it can completely miss the mark and even hinder those it aims to help.

So how free are artists, journalists, and others who transmit images of people who are poor or vulnerable in other ways? Renzo Martens exposes how the aesthetics, the Western world's image mediation of the poor person in the Third World, are part of the matrix. Martens' film has sparked discussions in various art forums where people are alternately angered by his cynicism and admiring of the rhetoric that mirrors a colonial power structure. In my opinion he pinpoints an objectifying and colonial attitude by suggesting that the object/the other speak and claim the space to share their own narrative, rather than having an interpreter/photographer who describes and takes photos of them.

Martens says of his film *Enjoy Poverty*: "Most documentary films critique, or reveal, or show some outside phenomenon, like "oh this is bad,' or 'this is good', or 'this is tragic'. In this film, it is not the subject that is tragic, like poverty in Africa, it is the very way that the film deals with the subject that is as tragic. So that's why it's a piece of art, because it deals with its own presence, it deals with its own terms and conditions, it's not a referential piece, it's autoreferential."¹⁷⁾ Martens appears in the film himself, he films himself in a colonial khaki outfit, on a safari with porters behind him, he also has himself filmed as he teaches photography to a group of people. His point is that the film is art precisely because it deals with its own presence – how it was produced and the conditions for it. Martens also says: "My film is yet another industry that doesn't help the poor."¹⁸⁾ He is highly aware that he's as stuck in the system as everybody else. With the film he "leaves it" to the viewer to identify with either him, in the role he plays in the film with fruitless attempts to find a solution and justice both for the poor people and for his own participation – or stand outside.

Watching *Enjoy Poverty* is frustrating, it's challenging, because nobody can escape the system, there is no redemption. Part of my sense of powerlessness – that I've also experienced in several of my previous works – lies in this insight and the possibility I still have of exposing something of this matrix of aesthetics. Is it possible to see through the images that we base our discussions on? The images produced by the Westerner, by the Congolese, by perpetrators versus victims and other images that have become signifiers, stereotypes. 

Philosopher Mats Rosengren highlights the importance of going beyond the stereotypical images and trying to make an image of the system that produces them: "It is primarily this dynamic and self-perpetuating system that is exploitative – not the Westerners in and of themselves, even though they generally inhabit dominant positions within the political and financial realms. Martens showcases a clear and effective way to criticize the system from within: he also appears aware that such a criticism can never be articulated from a neutral place – obviously he and his film are also subsumed in this magma, with all the attendant ethical and political implications."¹⁹⁾ If knowledge isn't linked to meaning and content, there is no point to it beyond self-generation. The same is true of art. Is it possible to criticize the

system one participates in and if so how? Philosopher Boris Groys claims that the contradiction in which contemporary art activism is caught is positive: “First of all, only self-contradictory practices are true in the in a deeper sense of the word. And secondly, in our contemporary world, only art indicates the possibility of revolution as radical change beyond the horizon of our present desires and expectations.” He maintains that a political transformation cannot be achieved through the logic of the prevailing market economy and thus the change that an *art activist* is trying to engender is equally about the failure of this successful concept.²⁰⁾

Renzo Martens has continued his work in the Congo, the Netherlands, and Belgium with the Institute for Human Activities²¹⁾. The homepage reads: “The IHA asserts that even when art critically engages with global inequalities, it usually brings beauty, jobs, and opportunity to the places where such art is exhibited, discussed and sold.” At a lecture at IASPIS in October 2015 he brought two chocolate heads and said that he is investigating and wants to create a “critical art production that can fully deal with its own financial, economic and social terms and conditions.” The sculptures are made by the plantation workers Thomas Leba and Jeremy Magiala from Cercle d’Art des Travailleurs de Plantations Congolaises (CATPC). Renzo Martens holds up the sculptures and tells us: “They add their feelings and make these sculptures, as Congolese plantation workers cannot live off plantation labor, they will now live off critical engagement with plantation labor.” He maintains that this critique will be transmitted through the art created on site and through the seminars of the research institute.²²⁾ His investigation is about finding “various ways to somehow bypass the conditions of critical artistic production and the capital accumulation associated with it.”²³⁾ Thus art cannot escape the critical investigation that is necessary to knowledge production as well as to the system in which the art is created. His conclusion is that this critical investigation must take place in an encounter with the party oppressed by the same system, with those whose rights have been withdrawn, with those whose voices and emotional lives haven’t been acknowledged, not even in the realm of art.



5.2 To Be Free of an Image



“Need money for the bus? You should’ve thought of that before you acquired two serious illnesses and became homeless, with a childhood marked by addiction issues in a working class family, shouldn’t you?”
Sarah Granér.²⁴⁾

1.

I have interviewed more than 40 people about begging, how they do it and how they’re treated. It’s become clear as we’ve spoken that many, though not all, of them are Roma,

though ethnicity hasn't been a central issue. The introduction to "Den nya utsattheten – Om EU-migranter och tiggeri", *Socialmedicinsk tidskrift* [The new vulnerability – On EU migrants and begging] reads: "The majority of the impoverished EU citizens who are in the Nordic countries temporarily are Roma from the newest EU member states in the Balkans. Roma are highly vulnerable in many European nations."²⁵⁾

On July 15, 2015 the EU parliament adopted a resolution proposed by Soraya Post that acknowledges anti-Gypsyism as a specific form of racism as well as the Romani Holocaust during World War II. She writes: "No Roma were heard as witnesses at the Nuremberg trials where the Nazis were prosecuted for their crimes. Nor did any Roma receive reparations for their suffering. [...] This amounts to an acceptance of Nazi crimes against the Roma on the part of the majority culture, even as others were vindicated." Roma were denied entry into Sweden between 1914 and 1959, among other things this meant that they couldn't escape here during the Holocaust.²⁶⁾ The ban on Roma immigration centered on the same perceived threats and hierarchical view of humanity that the sterilization laws were based on. "The persecution continues as long as I

am denied my humanity by prejudiced people. In 1959 the Swedish authorities forced my mother to have an abortion when she was seven months pregnant and then sterilized her. She never saw the baby but the hospital staff told her it was a boy. There was no war, no racial propaganda, outside the hospital walls. We lived in the Swedish welfare state and my younger brother was murdered by the Swedish authorities. No camps necessary – just prejudice."²⁷⁾ It wasn't until 1982 that West Germany acknowledged that the Nazi regime murdered Roma due to their ethnicity.

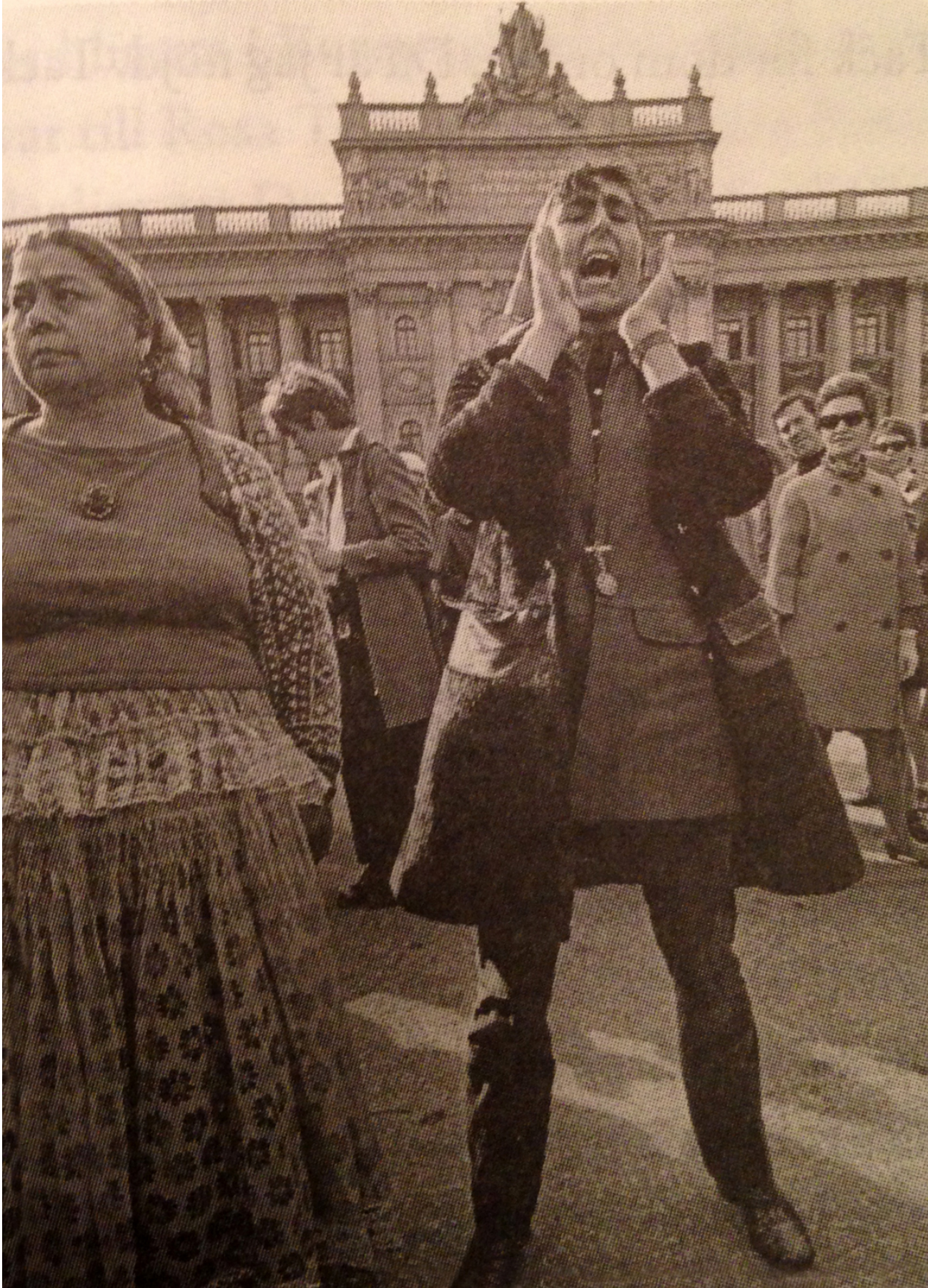
Prejudice thrived silently in the welfare state, at the hearth, in the private sphere. Prejudice is built out of mental imagery. Ways of seeing can bring up images of others that we can't see with our eyes. Through repetition these images become who the other *is*, it's a way of making new myths – for better and for worse. In this case it has been expressed through prejudice. Which is shared by various political ideologies.

When does knowledge have meaning and when does knowledge cease to be knowledge if it no longer has meaning? When it acquires a layer of normativity – "hush, this is what we've always done!"

2.


The author Katarina Taikon was Romani, she was born in a tent outside the Swedish town of Örebro

in 1932. She made it her life's work to change the view of Roma in Sweden: the prevailing, ingrained notion that they neither could nor wanted to live within the framework of modern society. Together with other activists and cultural figures she succeeded in evacuating the tent encampments that they lived in and pushed through the right to schooling. She never accused the welfare system, she never pinned the guilt on those who owned and had, her goal was simply to include everyone in Swedish society: In justice, in the law, and in the communal narrative, thoughts, images, ways of seeing and in the *glance from one human to another on the street*.



Katarina Taikon, protest outside the Swedish house of parliament September 26, 1969. Photo: Folke Hellberg/SCANPIX.

In 1968 activists and cultural workers – Katarina Taikon among others – write in the journal *Zigenaren* [The Gypsy], about “The racial biology of the 1920s, about Per Albin Hansson’s support for scientific racism, about the desire of Swedish authorities at the time to rid themselves of Roma, the immigration ban, Nazism in Germany, about the deportations and the group of Norwegian Roma who were denied entrance to Norway and later were found among the dead in the camps. The editors saw a direct connection between the more socially acceptable Nationalism and the Fascist crimes from the 1930s and onward.”²⁸⁾

“The void that Katarina Taikon faced when she read about human rights is a void that’s persisted over the years. Since then many of us have stared into that void in a similar way: The gap between the idea that racism doesn’t exist in Sweden and our lived realities.”²⁹⁾ So writes Karolina Ramqvist. The tendency to make poor people in need of protection out to be greedy, spoiled Roma, can still be found today in the displacements that happen across European borders. 

The present situation of the Roma is a clear example of how immigration policy fails when industrialized nations produce refugees. The Roma have been excluded from immigration policy at two prior moments in history: After the Holocaust and after the wall came down, and once again now that the union has expanded. Thomas Hammarberg, a former Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights says that: “without changes in attitudes within the majority population, all programs aimed at improving the situation of the Roma people are bound to fail.”³⁰⁾ In 2012 The Council of Europe published a report on the situation of the Roma in Europe.³¹⁾

“The problem of statelessness and lack of personal documentation for thousands of Roma in Europe must be addressed with resolve, as these persons are often denied basic rights such as education, health care, social assistance and the right to vote.”³²⁾ The purpose of the report is to show the link between the right to education, health care, housing, work and other fundamental freedoms. There are at present big differences between all of the EU nations, but generally speaking the situation is worse for Roma from the east. The report concludes that major advances have been made in the past two years toward the inclusion of Roma and that much remains to be done.³³⁾ In Sweden the Roma were recognized as a national minority in 2000. There are 10–12 million Roma around Europe, four out of five still live under the poverty line – except for in the Nordic countries.

“The survival issue is not a Third World issue; it is a global issue and an issue of globalization.” writes artist and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha in *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism, and the Boundary Event*.³⁴⁾ Parallel to the appeal to overhaul energy use and overconsumption in the world, to handle debt and environmental crises, people are uniting to reconcile and to pardon the people who have been excluded throughout history. In March 2014 the Swedish government published *Den mörka och okända historien – Vitbok om övergrepp och kränkningar av romer under 1900-talet*. [The Dark and Unknown History – White Paper on Abuse and Violations of Roma during the 20th Century.] The white

paper is an acknowledgement and a starting point for strengthening the work on the human rights of Roma. “A survey of political motivations and measures during the first half of the 20th century shows that registrations, sterilizations, the removal of children from their parents, expulsion, and the refusal to include Roma in the population registry were motivated and executed based on the assumption that Roma were undesirables. These measures greatly complicated life for the Roma. Precisely this notion that Roma weren’t part of society also served as a motivation for taking measures directed at the group.”³⁵⁾ “It would be a mistake to view poverty among Roma as simply a social problem. Anti-Gypsyism is the root of their outsider status with all that follows. The deeply rooted prejudice against Roma is what fuels the discrimination”³⁶⁾ according to Thomas Hammarberg. Katarina Taikon didn’t advocate assimilation, she demanded that: “Roma culture must be respected and space must be made for it in our country.” She used the term “integration”.³⁷⁾


3.

Culturally and socio-politically conditioned views, ways of seeing that create norms through systematic use – *framing* – become restrictions for what can be heard, read, seen, perceived, and known. In Judith Butler’s words: “This ‘not seeing’ in the midst of seeing, this not seeing is the condition of seeing, has become the visual norm, and it is that norm that is a national norm, one conducted by the photographic frame in the scene of torture. In this case the circulation of the image outside the scene of its production has broken up the mechanisms of disavowal, scattering grief and outrage in its wake.”³⁸⁾ The white paper constitutes a vindication of the Roma. But it is only the beginning. It means that all citizens must change something, rephrase something, express something different verbally and physically. Without an acknowledgement that idea, that image doesn’t exist. Acknowledgement is given to someone. Acknowledgement is also the acceptance of someone.

After the government published the white paper the phrase *the Roma who come here to beg* became more common to denote those who beg, as did variations thereof such as *Romanian Roma who beg*, or *Roma migrants*, or *the begging Roma* – despite the fact that Roma are not the only people begging on the streets.³⁹⁾ I haven’t met one single Romani Swedish citizen who begs. A text on the history of begging in Sweden was published in 2015 on forskning.se: “In some municipalities we hear arguments reminiscent of those heard during the 19th century: Send the Roma home, they’re able-bodied and can work.” Thus Roma have become “the undeserving poor” according to Dick Harrison, professor of history at Lund University. He sees the attitudes of the majority culture as well as historical patterns repeat themselves.⁴⁰⁾ In the book *Stranger Shores* J. M. Coetzee writes that our historical existence is a part of our present being, that it is inseparable. He claims that it is exactly the part of us that belongs to the past that we can’t fully understand because in order to do so we would need to understand ourselves both as “objects of historical forces” as well as “subjects of our own historical self-understanding”.⁴¹⁾ We can’t understand ourselves in the present, but we can – based on

what we do in the present – change our understanding of our historical self. We can confront our understanding of our historical self, in an encounter with the present.

I ask key figures in regular contact with people who are in Sweden begging what percentage of these people are Roma and about their view of that designation. My first contact, Victor Emanuel Chiorean, writes me an email: “If one is looking for exact statistics on what percentage of the beggars in Sweden are Romanian Roma, one will run into a couple of obstacles:

1. Free movement makes demographic data difficult to parse.
2. The individuals who allegedly beg are not registered in Sweden or in Romania, they simply leave and return when things get really dire. So there is no official statistic that investigates this. What we do have are samples attempted by various actors, among others the police and other authorities in Sweden.
3. The demographic underreporting that the Romanian Romani populations constantly are up against. According to the official Romanian census there are about 500,000 Roma in Romania, while the EU, the European Council, and human rights organizations maintain that the population is more like 2,000,000. Which would indicate that they are underreported by 75 percent. The reason is difficult to pin down, but many Roma don't want to identify themselves as such.” 

The artist and public intellectual Hans Caldaras is of Romani descent, he grew up leading a travelling life and started school at age 10. He writes me: “Many of the Romanians and Bulgarians who beg are Romani, but it is important to stress that some from countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland aren't Roma. It is worrisome to identify begging with Roma since this increases anti-Gypsyism and general antipathy toward Roma.”

A third contact, who was born in Hungary and grew up in Romania, explains to me over the phone that Romania and Hungary have many minorities who are discriminated against and ignorance makes it easier to call them all Roma. Rickard Klerfors, an economist from the organization Hjärta till Hjärta [Heart to Heart] writes that many of those who come here and beg are Roma, but not all. ⁴²⁾

An interview in *Dagens Nyheter* on February 10, 2015 reads: “She and the siblings who are with her in the workshop stress that they aren't Roma, they are Rudari. A Christian ethnic group who do not speak Romani, but who the Romanian government counts as Roma. They live in the village of Crovu, five miles from Bucharest where the mother takes care of the children, while they try to make a living. ‘There are no jobs at home. I don't have a job, neither does my husband and it is hard to sell spoons, since that doesn't bring in much money. I only have four years of schooling and I have six children to support,’ says Aurelia Marin.” ⁴³⁾

So it seems reasonable that the discussion of begging be associated with, but not conflated with, the situation of the Roma. Even if a majority of those who beg on the streets are Romanian Roma, and Roma

are the largest minority in Europe, the designation *the Roma who beg* is very problematic, for several reasons: Because Roma in general are associated with begging and it strengthens prejudice against Roma and thus discrimination. If efforts are made to earmark money for Roma who beg and their children and non-Romani people who beg are singled out because of this, the latter would end up at the bottom of the hierarchy. Any categorization that strengthens one group risks marginalizing another.⁴⁴⁾

4.

Judith Butler suggests that “we” consider where the normative operates: “namely through norms that produce the idea of the human who is worthy of recognition and representation at all. [...] In other words, what is the norm according to which the subject is produced who then becomes the presumptive ‘ground’ of normative debate.”⁴⁵⁾ Only those who do the begging, or those who do the giving on the street can determine this norm. Özz Nujen jokes that Swedes say: “I’m not racist, but...” He maintains that nobody is completely free of racism, there is no neutral position. Trinh T. Minh-ha writes: “As human history substantiates,

it sometimes takes a catastrophe, whether ‘natural’ or man-made, to pull us together across endless security walls and boundaries. (And yet...) Our massive drive for destruction could then find itself mirrored by an equally immense capacity for forgiveness and hope. [...] However it is in the face-to-face with the impossible – the irreparable and the non-negotiable – that the possibility of forgiveness arises, [...] For the debt of love knows no limit; what it requires exceeds all judicial logic and processes.”⁴⁶⁾

5.



Gothenburg, Brunnsparken, 2012.

Europe, ask the Roma for forgiveness!

To see is to ask to look, to ask to receive an image.

6.

During the spring of 2013 a couple of conversations with those who beg were finally published in the media, and these images began to edge out the first images that had been produced on assumption and speculation.⁴⁷⁾ Journalists Josefin Hökerberg and Roger Turesson interviewed some of the people begging in Stockholm, visited their encampment here, and went to the village of Malovinat in Romania to see how they lived in their hometown. They are poor, they organize best they can in order to help each other. According to these articles they make an average of 150 kronor a day, which is 4,000 kronor per month.⁴⁸⁾

In Romania the minimum monthly wage is 2,500 kronor. Journalists are investigating those who beg because their readers are worried and wonder if they should give. Are those who beg truly deserving? It's a good thing that media investigates – and compares – activities. Which needs does an activity respond to, take banking for instance? Are the demands of authenticity higher on those who beg, or as high as those made on those who sell advertising, for example? The activities that are investigated also indicate where the fears, the uncertainties, lie – in this case in the Swedish reading public.

7.

I bike to Högdalen, colloquially called “Highvalley”, and onward to Cyklopen, a cultural center which is being built by the nonprofit organization Kulturkampanjen (www.cyklopen.se). There I find Alvaro who curses the “gypsies” in the encampments a few hundred meters away because they steal his clothes, building materials, and chairs. He's caught them red-handed inside Cyklopen. His burnt-out car is outside.

– They burned my car, and look at the cherry picker, which we need for our construction work, it was next to my car and got half burned too.

– But was it really they who burned your car, why would they do that? I ask. I understand why they would take clothes and building materials, but not why they would burn a car. Destruction is something else entirely.

He hesitates:

– Perhaps it was some youth who tried to...

I've just read Lawen Mohtadi's recent book on the life of Katarina Taikon and am thinking how easy it is, when one is emotional, to blame everything that goes wrong on

those one doesn't have much contact with, those one doesn't understand, those who are outside of the social system.

– They put up camp here three months ago. The entire forest is a sewer now. They don't wash, they just dump their dirty clothes in a pile once they're done with them. Send them away, Alvaro says, emphatically.

Lasse and I leave Alvaro and continue onto a bridge from which one of the encampments is visible, a trailer, three cars, people working on a car. We take another dirt path that leads to another larger encampment and start walking but we stop after 10 meters, we feel like we're intruding on people's private life. We turn around and walk toward the exit off the main road. A big rock blocks the entrance. A car turns off onto the gravel to get around the stone, a window is rolled down, someone bums cigarette and shows a begging sign.

While we each roll a cigarette some other people come walking, they stop too and want a smoke. They're Roma who've come from Spain. Suddenly Alvaro shows up on a bike, is curious, stops and starts speaking fluent Spanish. Some people pass in their cars and wave. Alvaro greets them with a friendly "Hola" and speaks to them a bit in Spanish. His animosity is gone.

– Survival, I tell Alvaro, who responds that all Roma ever think about is money, he's lived with many of them, both in communities as well as in prison.

– That's not true, is it? I read a book about Katarina Taikon. Swedish Roma and Travellers, haven't had the same opportunities in terms of schooling and housing, and they're obviously still affected by that. It takes time to wash away prejudice.

– I know several Taikons, Alvaro says. Have you lived here long?

– No, I live on Söder.

In that moment I feel like I'm almost apologizing for living where I do. But I go on:

– If you're viewed as shit you become shit, unless you're truly exceptional. Why should one expect more from a poor Romani person than from a person from Söder or Östermalm? Who among us can say that money isn't "all we ever think about", in the sense that we're focused on making money, surely those with a lot of money do too, how else did they make all of it?

It smells bad outside the encampment where we're standing, like sewage.

Do you know Harry? Alvaro asks Lasse.

– Yes, he's a Finnish Roma, he was in prison for years and when he got out he asked all his friends if they would clean for him. I didn't, but 50 kronor an hour was pretty good pay...

– They keep exchanging names and talk about people who've been to prison and others who've fallen into various types of addiction.





Högdalen 2013. Photo: Andree Bodén.

As I stand there I think about *allemansrätten*, the Swedish right of public access to the land, that once ensured the forest was everybody's pantry, everybody's right to the bare

necessities. I tell Alvaro that what I'm most afraid of is exactly what he said: "If they don't fit in, we'll kick them out." What do we do to ourselves when we say that? He smiles, looks me in the eye and says that he knows what I mean. He's been testing me, my thoughts, knew who I was when he said that. I think about places I've spent a lot of time, the West Bank, Gaza, the townships of Soweto and Alexandra, and try to understand. People there live in a sort of shared economy and help each other with things like daycare and unemployment support, because there's no other infrastructure. They have their own laws, their own judicial process outside of the national

law... My head is spinning. Should I retreat to Söder and make art in a space designated for art, as I've been taught to do. Why should I meddle here, on site? What is my role as an artist? Am I making a living off people in misery? Lasse says he's never seen me the way I was when I told Alvaro I lived on Söder.

– I've never seen you apologize before, he said.

Lasse and I have known each other for fifteen years. He was once my student at the Umeå Academy of Fine Arts.

– I've never seen you apologize before, he said.

– Don't apologize for the circumstances you were born into, he continues.

– My circumstances were different, that's all.

8.

The next day Lasse calls to tell me that visiting the encampments almost sent him into depression, he doesn't know if he can handle it psychologically. He has his hands full getting on his feet, creating routines, making a life for himself in which he can function and maybe finally be healthy, finally make his own money and possibly also be an artist. He explains to me that he has what he calls a "view from the bottom", that he "is in the darkness, in the environment, down in the dirt. Some people grow up and reach the light, reach far."

I understand, or suspect, that he's trying to show me something. I also understand a bit more about Katarina Taikon's journey and that

she didn't do it on her own, but in a community in which she was active and that she helped create through her "belief in the unassailability of humankind" as Lawen Mohtadi puts it.⁴⁹⁾ Taikon said that "people can accuse one of just about anything" and even after 1968 when Roma were allowed to live in apartments and go to school she noticed certain

attitudes. As Mohtadi puts it: “What happens when the legal obstacles to equal rights are torn down, but injustice still permeates society?”⁵⁰⁾

9.

The Swedish ESF Council has been tasked with managing the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived – FEAD. They haven’t been able to find a designation they want to use. “Swedish FEAD isn’t interested in if this is specifically about Roma or if the poor come from certain countries. The target group is simply impoverished, marginalized people who move around Europe in search of a living and a better life and who lack the right to aid and support according to Swedish law.”⁵¹⁾

I emphasize that begging and giving are social actions rather than focusing on who performs them; the focus is on the activities, rather than on identities in a system. However I don’t disregard the racist attitudes inherent to the situation, they matter hugely, as they are the consequences of framing, among other things.

5.3 Giving in Free Movement Europe

1.

As previously mentioned, I hired a professional market researcher in the summer of 2011 to conduct a qualitative market survey in which givers in Sweden shared their views on those who beg and how they could become more successful at begging. The survey report states that a successful beggar:

1. Is in a dire situation that is more or less temporary.
2. Is active – gets something because they are doing something.
3. Is relatively clean – nobody wants to be close to someone who is too dirty.
4. Is “normal” – a person with “normal” clothes that one can identify with is easy to understand – and does not make the giver uncomfortable with strange or unusual rituals.
5. Can offer a reason for being in said situation, or explain what the money is going to be used for.

The beggars need to meet these various requirements that we as potential givers make on them in order to appear “authentic”. Different kinds of beggars are ranked in relation to that ideal and thus the parameters listed above disqualify many of the people who beg on the streets of Sweden.

The survey also serves as the basis for a film that demonstrates how a begging person has limited room to maneuver in terms of presenting themselves as credible. The giver’s worldview sets the frames for that space. So the begging person’s position is very much locked as long as there are images that imply that a.) Ultimately Swedish beggars are included in the Swedish safety net and b.) Ultimately foreign beggars – who at this point have begun to be termed migrants – are organized, either in the sense that they make obscene amounts of money, or in that they are exploited. Basically, there is no right way. It is difficult to find any agency in this situation. The dilemmas are very real. One of the givers interviewed in the market survey complained: “My resources are limited, parting with 100 kronor leaves a hole in my wallet.” So how should money be distributed when the situation is dire one way or another? What individual responsibility lies with the person who believes that fundamentally society is at fault?

2.

In the summer of 2013 I try in a similar vein to ask every person begging on Götgatan in Stockholm, from Slussen to Skanstull – a stretch I walk daily – about their image of givers on the streets of Sweden. Laura Chifiriuc is my interpreter. She subtitled my film with EU citizens begging in Gothenburg and is versed in these lines of inquiry. She’s from Romania and while we can’t assume that everybody begging on Götgatan that day speaks Romanian, it turns out everybody except for one Swedish man does. Two people don’t want to talk to us. They raise their hands when they see my camera and aren’t interested, even though Laura explains what we’re doing. The others share their stories.

We ask how business is going and what they do. They’ve come to Sweden to try to make money for their own survival and for that of their family. They tell us in various ways that

life is very hard in Romania. There is no work, no support, no nothing. Some of them have had their houses destroyed by floods. When they come to Sweden they help each other with food, a place to sleep, and travel. They want to send money home but feel begging has become much harder – people give less and less and several of them think that's due to increased economic hardship in Sweden. None of those we speak with expect the Swedish welfare state to help them in any way.

3.

In August 2013 Laura and I travel to Bucharest to interview people begging there. Despite a Romanian law prohibiting those who are deemed able to work from begging, Laura has seen people beg as recently as the winter of 2012.⁵²⁾ For three days and nights we look in the types of places where you're likely to find people begging in Sweden: In the subway, outside shopping malls, places with plenty of pedestrians. The first day we find two seniors begging to supplement their pensions. The street is also a place where they can meet people. We encounter an older man, on sick leave since 1989, whose pension doesn't cover his rent. Around the corner we find an 80-year-old woman who tells us that her husband recently died. That the funeral was so expensive that she ran out of money. She's there temporarily, for a week, waiting for her retirement check that has been delayed due to a public holiday. She doesn't ask anybody for money; but people still give and many seem to know her. We move on to Calea Victoriei. On the sidewalk, across from the police headquarters a man sits begging. One of his legs has been amputated.

“For me this is the only way to survive, but I dream of a real job. I still have both my arms. I've heard from friends that it is possible for cripples to get upper-body work and I would love that opportunity, but nothing seems to come of it. Perhaps I should try to go to a different country.”

He says he has been begging on the street for 18 years, since the accident, and that the police leave him alone since he isn't considered able-bodied.

Then we go to the old city, the quarters tourists visit to shop and eat at sidewalk cafes. Surely there will be beggars there. But we don't find any. We ask some patrolling policemen and they say that some who used to beg now sell roses, safety pins and other things, the rest aren't here anymore. Those who can't survive in Bucharest seem to go to other European cities. Free movement within the EU has created an opportunity for people to seek sustenance in other parts of Europe. “We export beggars”, Laura's Romanian friends joke. They don't look happy when they say it.

The number of poor EU citizens coming to Sweden for work is expected to rise significantly. Some of them build their own homes – often together – on commons, some rent a place to sleep, some sleep on the streets. *Socialstyrelsen*, the Swedish national board of health and welfare, found 370 homeless EU citizens in Sweden when they attempted to map homelessness among EU citizens, however the government coordinator for the homeless, Michael Anefur, estimates that the actual

number is somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 people.⁵³⁾ Aaron Israelsson, the editor in chief of *Faktum* magazine writes: “In 2013 alone Romania received 3.6 billion dollars from guest workers abroad. That amount includes large sums acquired through begging on the streets of Sweden, among other places. This aid is far more effective than the earmarked EU economic aid to the Roma minorities in the eastern member states. Because it turns out that the EU money has had virtually zero impact, according to the EU’s own accounting reports.⁵⁴⁾ If that is the case: then why is the “aid” given by the individual donor on the street to the person begging handled better than the official EU aid?

We didn’t find any Roma begging in Bucharest. The disabled man is not Romani, neither are the retirees, or the young man we spoke to. Nor are they migrants. There are many life stories behind begging, but the fact is that most EU citizens begging in Europe are Roma. The majority of those I’ve spoken with in Gothenburg, as well as on the streets and in the various encampments in Stockholm, have been Roma. The Roma who exploit the freedom of movement to find sustenance in other countries, when their own country doesn’t meet their needs, are trying to take control of their circumstances and improve them. The fact that Roma emigrate in higher numbers also has to do with anti-Gypsyism: the historic and continued racism directed at Roma.

In February 2012, the Council of Europe issued a report on Traveller and Roma human rights in Europe. Thomas Hammarberg ordered and published the report in his capacity as Council of Europe commissioner: “The commissioner has repeatedly highlighted that anti-Gypsyism is a crucial factor preventing the inclusion of Roma in society and that resolute action against it must therefore be central to any efforts to promote their integration.⁵⁵⁾

On 20 March 2014, Hammarberg makes a statement on Sweden’s treatment of Roma EU migrants. “The municipalities are unwilling to do anything to indicate that they understand the situation, they won’t even install a toilet. Nor do they want to create more beds in homeless shelters. Nothing is done to improve daily life.”⁵⁶⁾ Responsibility is shunted upward and sideways when the Romanian ambassador proposes that Sweden needs to ban begging, as Romania would then care for its own. At the same time one points to the overly national EU policy and argues that the individual nation-state – in this case Romania – is responsible for using the EU aid it is given for Roma. They need to “pay their dues”, as some from the Swedish liberal party put it. “The government exploits EU cooperation to circumvent accusations that they are creating policy in nationalistic self interest.”⁵⁷⁾ The alternative appears to be further centralization of power.

On March 25, 2015 the Swedish government presents its white paper on abuse and violations of Roma in the 20th century. The same day that the report is issued, Socialstyrelsen issues a press release in which they accept historic responsibility: “Socialstyrelsen and Medicinalstyrelsen [the national board for medicine] have repeatedly been more than passive executors, they have been active in discriminating against Roma and Travellers, or limiting their access to social support, says Eva

Wallin.”⁵⁸⁾ Does this include present-day Romani EU citizens? 

Again: The discourse on begging is associated with, but should not be conflated with, the Roma situation. The Schengen Agreement (Romania is not yet a member of Schengen, but is expected to become one according to the Swedish government’s informational homepage about the EU) was updated in June 2013 in regards to interactions between member states.⁵⁹⁾ “The new rules for evaluation mean a transition from the current inter-state system for audit to an EU strategy in which the central coordinated role is given to the Commission.”⁶⁰⁾ What does this mean? To what extent can a country interfere with another country’s actions when this has consequences for other member states, for instance regarding reactions to begging? In which way are the Romanian and Swedish systems connected (if at all) because of the EU? Hans Swärd, Professor of Social Work at Lund University, answers my questions: “They are connected for certain groups within the labor market or the educational systems. There are rules regarding the right to study in other EU countries and, if you work in another EU country, there are a number of agreements. The problem is that the system does not include those outside the labor market.”⁶¹⁾

The question of the situation of poor EU citizens has reached a point where it has begun to generate resistance from other parts of society. During a few winter months in 2013 and 2014, a group of activists at the Cyklopen cultural center in Högdalen in Stockholm demonstrate through action that they see and hear the predicament of the people who beg. They organize clothing drives and actions. The organizer is invited to sit on the couch at *Gomorrön Sverige*, a morning news show on national Swedish TV.

“Why are you doing this?” the host asks Anna Silver, who started the Facebook group and organized the drives. “It could have been me”, she says.⁶²⁾ With that the discussion about solidarity across national borders is underway. She doesn’t speak for them. She doesn’t claim to give them a voice. She sees them and she sees herself in them, sees all of us, enmeshed in various cultural and social structures and conditions.

“The mechanical solidarity that has its roots in highly homogenous societies, presupposes sameness between people; similarity creates cohesion. Organic solidarity, a more solid unit, conversely, is built on difference”, writes Sven-Eric Liedman, professor of history of ideas.⁶³⁾

The registry that the police has been criticized for – there is an ongoing investigation into whether it was an ethnic registry of Roma or not – has, by dint of the subsequent debates contributed to making visible the image of Roma held by an institution of power serving national justice. Protests are staged by groups such as Cyklopen, Aktion Kåkstad, Allt åt Alla, Det Kunde Varit Jag, Ingen Människa är Illegal, Insamling för Hemlösa EU Migranter i Högdalen, Linje 19, Solidaritet för 17, Vänsterpartiet Sollentuna and others. On 13 March 2014 job-seeking and homeless EU citizens were ousted from their encampment in an abandoned military area in Helenelund, in Sollentuna. Later the encampment was demolished by bulldozers.⁶⁴⁾ When the authorities enforce statutes and rules there is always room for interpretation. In

its report, Socialstyrelsen [The National Board of Health and Welfare] calls for more knowledge on what the praxis is for these migrants, for the social services in the various municipalities and for the volunteer organizations. “Many don’t know the rules. [...] One wishes that everyone would see the possibilities rather than the restrictions in the statutes.”⁶⁵⁾

The application and interpretation that the authorities used in this instance was not in line with the EU Commission’s recommendation of a change in attitude aimed at fighting discrimination against Roma. Activists in the action groups interpreted the legislation differently. On the Facebook page “Stoppa Vräkningen i Helenelund” [Stop the evictions in Helenelund] they describe the course of events as follows:

- “The eviction notice that says that everyone living in the area has to leave came two days beforehand.
- Authorities used English to inform those living in Helenelund about the eviction, a language the latter do not understand.
- The actual eviction notice was signed by the city of Stockholm, which is incorrect as this is the municipality of Sollentuna.
- There are several different deadlines for appeal. Ten days as well as three weeks.
- In the eviction notice it said that the encampment was located in a recreational area, which is completely wrong, it is an abandoned military area.
- Forty-five names were listed, but twice as many people lived in the encampment. One cannot evict people if one does not have their identity numbers.
- One of the reasons given for the eviction is littering, which is also not right as the place is tidy, seeing that those living there are responsible for cleaning up all garbage.”

Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg again: “If we handle this well and show at least a modicum of dignity when we approach those who come here and don’t send people away, but instead actively contribute to change in their home countries, this could be remembered as a period in history during which people were proactive and didn’t merely sweep Roma human rights under the rug.”⁶⁶⁾

4.

Free movement is intended to open national borders, but when poor EU citizens make use of this freedom to travel and do what they can to make money within the framework of the law, they are met by rules and statutes intended to prevent them from enjoying this opportunity. The press release for the previously mentioned report from Socialstyrelsen says: “The fundamental rule in the EU legislation for freedom of movement is that job-seeking EU migrants have the right to avail themselves of social services in the EU country

and in the municipality in which they are present.”⁶⁷⁾ However, Socialstyrelsen found in its investigation that “In Swedish municipalities the social services usually make the assessment that EU migrants have the right to aid only in emergencies and in those instances usually in the form of contributions toward a ticket home and emergency housing in connection to this. EU migrants are included in the ‘roof above ones head’ guarantee in those municipalities in which such a guarantee exists.”⁶⁸⁾ According to the supranational ordinance adopted by the European Parliament and the EU Council, equal treatment is to be guaranteed

and include all persons within the territory of a member state, but the individual states act differently.


The Swedish government’s informational homepage about the EU reads: “For the freedom of movement to work in practice the EU nations have drawn up a system for coordination of social security benefits within the EU. [...] The rules for coordination mean that for instance a person who moves to a different EU nation to work, should, in principle, be covered by the host country’s social security system from the first day of work.”⁶⁹⁾ That this regards “work” is clear. However, what seems unclear is which rules of coordination apply to those seeking work: “Socialstyrelsen’s assessment is that municipalities and authorities that encounter the EU citizens are in strong need of understanding relevant rules and how they should be applied. This regards for example when a person is registered with the unemployment office, or evaluated for assistance or temporary housing.”⁷⁰⁾

5.

How does the national system for human rights and solidaric welfare work in the context of the supranational system built on the basis of consensus within the EU? I pose this question to Hans Swärd over email and he answers: “It is only recently that the EU has been able to agree on joint poverty programs. Often the goals are long range and have been difficult to reach. There are big differences between the poorest and the richest EU nations. To access the welfare systems in the various countries one needs to have a permanent residency permit, to have worked and qualified for sick leave, pension etc. The very poorest groups end up outside of the traditional safety nets.” Freedom of movement is limited for the poor, both within national and supranational law and justice, and if you are Romani the risk is even bigger that you also are subject to ethnic discrimination.

Peo Hansen, a political scientist, studies migration politics and integration in Europe. He maintains that few political topics paint a clearer picture of the issues central to the construction of civil society. Migration policy functions as a lens through which we see what the EU wants to be and

what it wants to become. He poses the question: Who belongs in the EU and who are the strangers; who is said to contribute to the construction of the new Europe and what is seen as a threat to it?”⁷¹⁾ When this new edifice pushes people to their knees, in supplicant positions, on the streets of Europe and Europe does not assume responsibility for this the much-vaunted European community falters – to whom does it fall to uphold this community? Of what should it consist?

The charity of the individual toward the person begging cannot be the solution. “Solidarity!” the protestors shouted on March 13, 2014, before the demolition of the homes that seventy EU migrants had built in Helenelund, Sollentuna. Sven-Eric Liedman describes the difference between charity and solidarity thus: “Charity is based on one individual’s dependency on another; solidarity is based on a mutual dependency within the generally ruling welfare system.”⁷²⁾ Liedman argues that it is important to differentiate between a solidarity founded on mutuality and one that is directed mainly, or only, at those who are struggling. “As soon as the boundary between solidarity and charity is exploded, the solidarity directed at those in need will be emphasized.”⁷³⁾ 

Should the Swedish welfare system be based on solidarity or charity? The operations, other than social services, that contribute to caring for the poor and homeless in Sweden, are mainly churches, deaconry, the Salvation Army and the City Mission. What happens if the empathetic aspect of the political system is replaced by charitable organizations and individual encounters on the street where each and every one is the judge of who is deserving and who is not? The Victorian adage concerning “the deserving and the undeserving poor” comes into play again.⁷⁴⁾ Should it all hinge on whether or not I feel generous that day? When I want to give to the poor and when I want to abstain? That I devise strategies for whom I should give to and whom is less deserving of a donation?

It is difficult to parse what affects attitudes to the poor on the street; if structural oppression creates those attitudes, or if the attitudes create structural oppression. When I catch myself devising strategies for who I want to give a penny on the street – to that particular woman with the beautiful eyes, or the man who always seems to have a slight smile on his face, but not to the one with tremors and a cane – I know I am caught in economically selective thinking yet these thoughts create a sort of space of action between me and the other, a space in which to articulate a policy built on other basic conditions. It is a demanding space, established on both an inter-human and a societal level.

In the market survey where those who give got to share their view of those who beg, as in my interviews with the latter in Sweden and in Romania, a multitude of images emerge that are at play in every encounter between the two groups on the street. Images of the nation’s (functional and dysfunctional respectively) welfare systems, the European Union’s (free and unfree) movement, complicity, racism, generosity, egotism, solidarity. Visions of what labor is and could be. Images of Roma. Of givers. To whom is the beggar really directing their plea?

The begging on the streets challenges the reigning EU policy, it raises questions about how the

distribution should happen.

The giving on the streets challenges the same policy and raises the same essential questions.



Salomon Andersson
Silfverovant $\frac{15}{2}$ 43
Luffande tiggare



The photos are from the archives of the Västerås and Uppsala police department.



Lo peor es pedir

An etching by Goya published in 1863 is titled "The Worst is to Beg".



Etching by Rembrandt van Rijn, Beggars Receiving Alms at the Door of a House, 1648.

6.

On February 1, 2016 Martin Valfridsson, national coordinator for vulnerable EU citizens handed over his final report to the government.⁷⁵⁾ The report isn't just about those who come to Sweden and beg: "The term vulnerable EU citizens, is used in this report to refer to

individuals who are citizens of another EU nation and don't have so-called right of residence in Sweden. Those who don't have right of residence have significantly lower chances of obtaining access to welfare here. In somewhat simplified terms, you need to have a job or good chances of obtaining one to have right of residence. Judging who has right of residence is often complicated.”⁷⁶⁾ The report maps the various operators in civil society, what's going on in Sweden, Romania, and Bulgaria, as well as what collaborations have been initiated and which should be initiated. The report maps which rules apply and which should be applied to vulnerable EU citizens nationally as well as federally in free movement Europe.

To a well-meaning reader the report can be seen as a constructive step toward initiating necessary dialogue and making space for further negotiations between operators.⁷⁷⁾ For instance it suggests special county coordinators be appointed. What's to be coordinated depends on the situation at hand,

but mainly volunteer organizations, social services, and police. The investigator makes clear that strategies are needed to change structural rules and that they should lead to long-term support.

To a critical reader *coordination* could mean delimitation. For example the passage that reads “Municipalities and other main operators for primary schooling have the power, but not the obligation, to accept others than those who have a right to a primary school education according to the law on schooling.”⁷⁸⁾ It could lead to capriciousness – rather than room to act – which in the worst-case scenario could result in abuse from authorities.⁷⁹⁾


The report set off a heated debate: The majority seems to agree that discrimination in home countries and a lack of structural reform perpetuates poverty, but how can reform be achieved? The path to reform is hotly debated. Handouts on the street is one divisive issue. While some testify that exchanges on the street are rational acts which serve as an instructive encounter for both parties, others maintain that the handout perpetuates the impoverished person's situation and thus also that of the giver.⁸⁰⁾

7.

Fundamentally it is a question of who is granted which rights. Begging happens out of necessity, giving is a response to these unfulfilled needs. Giving is dependent on the state of necessity. Any aid work or charitable work may or may not involve compassion. This work may be necessary, but it is still the way of “charity” for the one who is aided must submit to the aid – to the solution. Aid work can only be viewed as a way of “freeing” those who are aided, but it can never be a solution. The risk

of paternalism is also inherent to charitable aid work, the risk of becoming an advocate, of knowing best when it comes to “what the other needs”.

The temporary shacks and campers should be regarded as crimes, the police “fights crime” such as settlements on occupied ground. The coordinator feels zero tolerance must be practiced. But “necessity knows no law”, Leif Eriksson, lecturer on global studies tells me, critically over the phone. “You can’t legislate against sleeplessness.” Leif maintains that when there is an emergency the necessity defense in the Swedish penal code, chapter 24 §4 applies.⁸¹⁾ He maintains that the evictions that have taken place can be described as violent social conflicts and often have their root in fundamental needs not being met: “If basic human needs aren’t met any talk of justice or human rights is pointless”, he says. But the short term must not be the enemy of the long term. Is the statute on necessity the only protection the poor have? How does necessity relate to the law? The expression “necessity knows no law” exists in several languages but is difficult for authorities to handle.⁸²⁾ The grounds for its application is that a situation arises suddenly and poses an immediate threat to life, limb, or property and in which no other solution than breaking the law is available. “In principle any act can be an act of necessity, there are no limitations on the statute” Ulrika Sandberg writes in her thesis in criminal law.⁸³⁾

Ultimately necessity is about ethics and values, which are important aspects of the culture of legislation but which aren’t always easily shaped into rule of law.⁸⁴⁾ The definition of necessity is at least two people and a situation between them that involves a “collision between two interests protected by the legal system”⁸⁵⁾, Sandberg writes and clarifies: “So in the end it comes down to a need to balance interests due to the collision between two interests that has occurred due to necessity.”⁸⁶⁾ Using a number of examples she stresses that the legal judgment demands a concession, a mediation, an exchange of some kind, a transaction for both parties. What that might be is a question that is specific to each situation. *Compassion* is necessary to organic solidarity and it is precisely compassion that lies at the root of the statute on necessity. “Necessity is a kind of superior interest of justice that should nullify the principle of ‘summum ius, summa iniúra’, which roughly translates to extreme justice is extreme injustice. Without this type of general criminal law, formal justice would look very unjust at times from both a human and a moral point of view,”⁸⁷⁾ Sandberg writes. 

In the cases where the person in need doesn’t expect or ask to receive a gift, but rather “takes their own right”, such as building themselves a shack to sleep in, necessity could be used as a justification, as that is how the law is written. *Necessity* and giving condition one another and the boundaries of each must be noted in order to create space for action. Necessity creates a kind of free space next to, or under the law. Civil organizations, artists, authors, and theoreticians have noted this space. So the question asked of the authorities, of those who negotiate to coordinate, of the begging as well as the giving person on the street is: How can the expression/image *necessity knows no law* be used, seen, visualized, felt,

activated, applied in order to create legal (!) discretion?

A new image emerges the coordinates of which – ethnicity, community, solidarity, humanity, urbanity, citizenship, migration – must be renegotiated and set. And it is an image that can't be developed by the givers alone.



In the work *Lights in the City* by artist Alfredo Jaar the cupola of Marché Bonsecours in Montreal was lit up by a red light every time a homeless person arrived at one of three shelters in Montreal and pushed a button.⁸⁸⁾ This makes it a public concern that not all citizens have a place to sleep. Jaar makes visible that which would not otherwise be visible. It's a way of developing images in the viewers. Thus he reveals how the private is connected to the public, he reveals the political – the boundaries drawn in society.⁸⁹⁾

Chapter 5: Art and the Political Notes













1. 📖 The audio recording is transcribed by the interpreter, Laura Chfiriuc and is partially reproduced here. The entire transcript can be found in the [archives of the thesis website](#).
2. 📖 Arne Dahl, *Blindbock*, (Stockholm: Bonnier Audio, 2013), audio book, Ch. 3, 22:20 min.
3. 📖 Josefine Hökerberg, “Åklagaren om Petrina: Det är inte människohandel”, *Dagens Nyheter*, July 26, 2013. Accessed July 11, 2016, www.dn.se/sthlm/aklagaren-om-petrina-det-ar-inte-manniskohandel.
4. 📖 Ibid.
5. 📖 Hannah Arendt, *Människans Villkor*, transl. Joachim Retzlaff, (Gothenburh: Daidalos, 1998), 17.
6. 📖 Bo Rothstein, “Därför bör vi göra det förbjudet att ge till tiggare”, December 28, 2013. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.dn.se/debatt/darfor-bor-vi-gora-det-forbjudet-att-ge-till-tiggare.
7. 📖 Dahl, Ch. 3, 23:40.
8. 📖 Susanna Alakoski, *Oktober i fattigsverige*, (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 2012), 178.
9. 📖 Ibid., 178.
10. 📖 In 2013 the number was 22.9%. Females 24% and Males 21.6%. See top row of the table: “European Union (28 countries)”, “People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by broad group of citizenship (population aged 18 and over)”, Demography report – 2015 edition, last updated July 14, 2016. Accessed April 27, 2016, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_peps05&lang=en.
11. 📖 Alakoski, 151.
12. 📖 Economist Anna Breman wrote a book that focuses on frequent giving of relatively small sums to nonprofits. Anna Breman *Forskning om filantropi: varför skänker vi bort pengar?*, (Stockholm: EFI [The Economic Research Institute], 2008), 14.
13. 📖 Svensk insamlingskontroll investigates, oversees, and approves so-called “90-accounts” for organizations, nonprofits, and religious communities. Svensk Insamlingskontroll, “Statistics”. Accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.insamlingskontroll.se/en/pages/statistics>.
14. 📖 Breman, 60.
15. 📖 Breman, 59.
16. 📖 Renzo Martens is an artist currently living and working Brussels, Amsterdam, and Kinshasa. Martens made a name

for himself with his controversial documentaries *Episode I* (2003) and *Episode III: Enjoy Poverty* (2008). In 2010 Renzo Martens founded the Institute for Human Activities (IHA), which initiated a gentrification program in the Congolese rainforest.

Episode III, also known as *Enjoy Poverty* is a 90-minute documentary film of Renzo Martens' work in the Congo. In an epic journey the film establishes that images of poverty are the most lucrative export in the Congo, these generate more income than traditional exports such as gold, diamonds, or cacao. The project website reads: "Amidst ethnic war and relentless economic exploitation, Martens sets up an emancipation program that aims to teach the poor how to benefit from their biggest resource: poverty. Thus, Congolese photographers are encouraged to move on from development-hindering activities, such as photographing weddings and parties, and to start taking images of war and disaster." But just as with the traditional exports, the humans who provide the raw material – "the poor being filmed, hardly benefit from it at all." Renzo Martens, "Episode III". Accessed August 1, 2016, <http://www.renzomartens.com/episode3/film>.















17. ☞ This quote of Renzo Martens can be found in the discussion when Erik Pauser makes his second interjection. Maria Eriksson Baaz, Erik Pauser, Mats Rosengren, and Elin Wikström, "Enjoying poverty?". Accessed April 12, 2016, <http://app.samladeskrifter.se/article/12>.
18. ☞ The quote is in the epigraph of *Ord & Bild*, January 18, 2014. Accessed May 12, 2016, <http://app.samladeskrifter.se/article/12>.
19. ☞ Eriksson Baaz, Pauser, Rosengren, Wikström, "Enjoying poverty?".
20. ☞ Groys, *On Art Activism*, 19. See also [chapter 1.2](#) "Notes on the Text" in the introduction to this thesis.
21. ☞ "Institute for Human Activities". Accessed April 27, 2016, www.humanactivities.org.
22. ☞ Renzo Martens, "News". Accessed April 27, 2016, www.renzomartens.com/news.
23. ☞ "SEPTEMBER 2015 – Congolese artists, academics, and CATPC-members gather for 'The Matter of Critique' at the IHA research center in Congo. IHA is organizing the international conference series 'The Matter of Critique' to address the material conditions of critical art production. At the former Unilever-plantation they discussed art, global economic inequality, and the various ways to somehow bypass the conditions of critical artistic production and the capital accumulation associated with it in places like London and Venice." Renzo Martens, "News". Accessed April 27, 2016, www.renzomartens.com/news.
24. ☞ Sarah Granér, *Med vänlig hälsning*, (Stockholm: Ordfront, Galago, 2010), 97.
25. ☞ "Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri", *Socialmedicinsk tidskrift*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (2015): 251. Accessed May 6, 2016, <http://socialmedicinsktidskrift.se/index.php/smt/issue/view/105>.
26. ☞ "Genom den så kallade Zigenarutredningens betänkande [1954] betonas för första gången samhällets ansvar för de missförhållanden som romer lever under. Utredningen konstaterar att hat och fördomar har väglett och påverkat myndigheternas beslutsfattande. För första gången erkänns institutionaliserad rasism och diskriminering." Quoted from the exhibition "Ett gott hem för alla", photographs by Anna Riwkin och Björn Langhammer, The Modern Museum of Art, Stockholm, October 17, 2015–January 24, 2016.
27. ☞ Soraya Post, "Vi måste göra romernas lidande till en del av vår historia", *Dagens Nyheter*, July 29, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.dn.se/kultur-noje/kulturdebatt/vi-maste-gora-romernas-lidande-till-en-del-av-var-historia.
28. ☞ Lawen Mohtadi, *Den dag jag blir fri: En bok om Katarina Taikon*, (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 2012), 158.
29. ☞ Karolina Ramqvist, "'Zigenerska' var början på en lång kamp", *Dagens Nyheter*, December 25, 2015. Accessed

April 27, 2016, www.dn.se/dnbok/zigenerska-var-borjan-pa-en-lang-kamp.

30.  Commissioner for Human Rights, “Human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe”, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2012), 40. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/prems/prems79611_GBR_CouvHumanRightsOfRoma_WEB.pdf.
31.  The work of the commissioners involves evaluating how human rights are respected in the member states and aiding in their implementation. The work of the commissioners includes maintaining a continuous dialogue with the governments and seeks to increase consciousness of and engagement in these rights. They publish their findings in reports and recommendations to the governments.
32.  “Human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe”, 222.
33.  “The years 2010 and 2011 saw major advances in the development of the European institutions’ explicit commitments to tackle the exclusion of Roma.” “Human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe”, 222.
34.  Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeism and the Boundary Event*. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 24.
35.  Regeringskansliet, Arbetsdepartementet, *Den mörka och okända historien – Vitbok om övergrepp och kränkningar av romer under 1900-talet*, Ds 2014:8, (Stockholm: Elanders Sverige AB, 2014). Accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/ea9e9da200174a5faab2c8cd797936f1/den-morka-och-okanda-historien---vitbok-om-overgrepp-och-krankningar-av-romer-under-1900-talet-ds-20148>.
36.  “Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri”, 265.
37.  From an article written in 1998 by Thomas Hammarberg, who at the time was ambassador of the Swedish Government on Humanitarian Affairs. The article is about Karl-Olov Arnstberg’s book, *Svenskar och zigenare. En etnologisk studie av samspelet över en kulturell gräns*.
Thomas Hammarberg, “Tarvligt angrepp mot romer. Sanningen är att romerna har diskriminerats i Sverige, skriver Thomas Hammarberg”, *Dagens Nyheter*, October 2, 1998. Accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.dn.se/arkiv/kultur/debatt-tarvligt-angrepp-mot-romer-sanningen-ar-att-romerna-har>.
38.  Judith Butler, “Torture and the Ethics of Photography: Thinking with Sontag”, *Frames of War*, (New York: Verso 2009), 100. Butler is referring to the photos of torture taken at Abu Ghraib, one of Saddam Hussein’s infamous prisons in Baghdad which the U.S. Army in 2003 turned into their biggest prison camp in occupied Iraq. The images were taken by American soldiers as they humiliated and tortured Iraqi prisoners and were then spread across the world. These images have come to symbolize the war in Iraq. In a book by Philip Gourevitch, Lyndie England who appears in the photos says: “Photos don’t matter one way or another in a war. It’s all so stupid. I mean, why does the government think I’m the bad guy? The government puts the blame on me just because they can – just like a decoy.” (Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure: A War Story*. (London: Picador, 2008) Philip Gourevitch collaborated with filmmaker Errol Morris who made hundreds of hours of interviews for his documentary *Standard Operating Procedure*, 2008.
39.  On Tuesday, March 25, 2014 the Government Offices of Sweden published the white paper that revealed 100 years of history filled with abuse and violations of Roma.
40.  Lotta Nylander, “Tiggeri genom tiderna – ett socialt dilemma”, *Forskning.se*, April, 14, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.forskning.se/2015/04/14/tiggeri-genom-tiderna-ett-socialt-dilemma.
41.  “Historical understanding is understanding of the past as a shaping force upon the present. Insofar as that shaping force is tangibly felt upon our lives, historical understanding is part of the present. Our historical being is part of

- our present. It is this part of our present – namely the part that belongs to history – that we cannot fully understand, since it requires us to understand ourselves not only as objects of historical forces but as subjects of our own historical self-understanding.” J. M. Coetzee, *Stranger Shores. Essays 1986-1999*, (New York: Vintage, 2002), 15.
42. 🖱️ Hjärta till Hjärta [Heart to Heart] is one of 41 organizations in Romania with some link to Sweden, the rest are listed on their website: Hjärta till Hjärta, “Värdighet här, förändring där”, September 17, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016, <http://media.hjartatillhjarata.se/2015/03/RPT-Organisationer-i-RU-o-BIU-version-2.2.pdf>.
43. 🖱️ Jessica Ritzén, “Jag säljer hellre skedar än tigger utanför Coop”, *Dagens Nyheter*, February 11, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.dn.se/sthlm/jag-saljer-hellre-skedar-an-tigger-utanfor-coop.
44. 🖱️ Racism can manifest in many different ways, it’s about mutual respect between people on the street and on all levels horizontally and vertically in society. Racism is an ethical phenomenon that has to do with organic solidarity (see text 5.3)
45. 🖱️ Butler, *Frames of War*, 138.
46. 🖱️ Minh-ha, 25.
47. 🖱️ Josefine Hökerberg, “Resan till tiggarnas hemby blev en chock”, *Dagens Nyheter*, September 28, 2013. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.dn.se/sthlm/resan-till-tiggarnas-hemby-blev-en-chock/. See also: “Frågor och svar. Tiggarna i Stockholm”, *Dagens Nyheter*, March 11, 2013, www.dn.se/arkiv/stockholm/fragor-och-svar-tiggarna-i-stockholm.
48. 🖱️ Josefine Hökerberg, “Jag vill inte titta folk i ögonen och be”, *Dagens Nyheter*, May 30, 2013. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.dn.se/arkiv/stockholm/jag-vill-inte-titta-folk-i-ogonen-och-be. See also: Josefine Hökerberg, “Florica Tudoricis lön: 186 kronor på en dag”, *Dagens Nyheter*, March 11, 2013. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.dn.se/arkiv/stockholm/florica-tudoricis-lon-186-kronor-pa-en-dag.
- 49, 50. 🖱️ Mohtadi, 122.
51. 🖱️ In 2015 five programs were granted more than a million kronor each for aid work for the poor in Sweden. Helen Uliczka, FEAD, “Inventering av Forskning och kunskap rörande FEADs målgrupper – resultat och reflektioner”, May 5, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.esf.se/Documents/Våra%20program/FEAD/Utlysning/Forskningsinventering%20FEADs%20målgrupper.pdf.
52. 🖱️ Statute 61 from 1991 prohibits a person who is able to work from asking the public for charity. Lege no. 61/1991 (Republicata 2011). Accessed April 13, 2016, politiaproximitate.ro/legea_61.html.
53. 🖱️ “Slutredovisning från den nationella samordnaren för utsatta EU-medborgare” [Final report from the national coordinator for vulnerable EU-citizens] presented in 2016, reads:
“In 2012 vulnerable EU citizens began to come to Sweden in larger numbers than before. Some came to beg, others to pick berries, or look for work. Over the next three years their numbers increased considerably. In the spring of 2014 an estimated 2,100 such individuals were present in Sweden. In April 2015 there were 5,000 individuals. Since then the numbers ceased to increase and a minor drop has been recorded. In November 2015 the number was estimated at 4,700 individuals. The number of children in the group varies, but is estimated at between 70 and 100.”
- Martin Valfridsson, “Framtid sökes – Slutredovisning från den nationella samordnaren för utsatta EU-medborgare”, Statens offentliga utredningar, (SOU 2016:6), 7. Accessed April 13, 2016, www.regeringen.se/contentassets/b9ca59958b5f43f681b8ec6dba5b5ca3/framtid-sokesslutredovisning-fran-den-nationella-samordnaren-for-utsatta-eu-medborgare-sou-2016_6.pdf.
54. 🖱️ Aaron Israelson, “Stödet till tiggaren Vanessa är unikt”, *Göteborgs-Posten*, March 19, 2014. Accessed April 13,











2016, gp.se/kulturnoje/1.2314378-stodet-till-tiggaren-vanessa-ar-unikt.

55.  Commissioner for Human Rights, “Human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe”, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2012), 40. Accessed April 13, 2016, www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/prems/prems79611_GBR_CouvHumanRightsOfRoma_WEB.pdf.
56.  Daniel Vergara, “Hammarberg: ‘Sverige hycklar om romska migranter’”, *Expo*, March 20, 2013, expo.se/2014/hammarberg-sverige-hycklar-om-romska-migranter_6445.html.
57.  Peo Hansen, *EU:s migrationspolitik under 50 år: ett integrerat perspektiv på en motsägelsefull utveckling*, (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2008), 218.
58.  Socialstyrelsen, “Allvarliga övergrepp mot romer och resande i Socialstyrelsens historia”, March 25, 2014. Accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/nyheter/2014mars/allvarligaovergreppmotromerochresandeisocialstyrelsenshistoria>.
59.  EU-upplysningen, “Schengen och fri rörlighet för personer”, last updated May 3, 2016. Accessed April 13, 2016, <http://eu-upplysningen.se/Om-EU/Vad-EU-gor/Schengen-och-fri-rorlighet-for-personer/>.
60.  “The new evaluation rules mean a shift from the current intergovernmental system of peer review to an EU-based approach where the central coordinating role is given to the Commission.” European Commission, Memo: “New Schengen Rules to Better Protect Citizens’ Free Movement”, 12 June 2013. Accessed April 13, 2016, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-536_en.htm.
61.  In the summer of 2014 a survey was commissioned: “Utredningen om trygghetssystemen och internationell rörlighet”, [Survey of safety systems and international movement] which aims to create an overview of Swedish social insurance from an international perspective. Statens Offentliga Utredningar [Swedish government surveys]. The survey is to be presented by January 31, 2017.
Socialdepartementet, “Tilläggsdirektiv till ToR-utredningen. Utredningen om trygghetssystemen och internationell rörlighet”, (S 2014:17), Regeringskansliet, December 10, 2015. Accessed April 13, 2016, www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/kommittedirektiv/2015/12/dir.-2015133/.
62.  After the authorities tore down the encampment in Högdalen on March 13, 2013 the EU-migrants made their way to Sollentuna to build a new encampment.
63.  Sven-Eric Liedman, *Att se sig själv i andra, om solidaritet*, (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 2012), 27.
64.  See my documentation in [the archives](#).
65.  Socialstyrelsen, “Hemlöshet bland utrikesfödda personer utan permanent uppehållstillstånd i Sverige”, (May 2013), 34. Accessed April 27, www.socialstyrelsen.se/publikationer2013/2013-5-3.
66.  Daniel Vergara, “Hammarberg: ‘Sverige hycklar om romska migranter’”.
67.  “Hemlöshet bland utrikesfödda personer utan permanent uppehållstillstånd i Sverige.
68.  Ibid., 31.

“The term EU migrants refers to EU/EEA citizens who come from a country outside the EU but who have resided in the EU for more than five years, as well as foreign nationals who are not in the process of seeking asylum.” (socialstyrelsen.se/nyheter/2013maj).

The 2015–16 government report “Framtid sökes – Slutredovisning från den nationella samordnaren för utsatta EU-medborgare” [In search of a future – final report from the national coordinator on vulnerable EU citizens] uses the designation “vulnerable EEA citizens temporarily in Sweden, meaning for no more than three months and who don’t have right of residency” (3). Accessed April 27, 2016,

www.regeringen.se/contentassets/b9ca59958b5f43f681b8ec6dba5b5ca3/framtid-sokesslutredovisning-fran-den-nationella-samordnaren-for-utsatta-eu-medborgare-sou-2016_6.pdf.

69.  EU-upplysningen, “Schengen och fri rörlighet för personer”, last updated May 3, 2016. Accessed April 13, 2016, <http://eu-upplysningen.se/Om-EU/Vad-EU-gor/Schengen-och-fri-rorlighet-for-personer/>.
——In the summer of 2014 “Utredningen om trygghetssystemen och internationell rörlighet” [The survey of safety systems and international mobility] was commissioned to survey Swedish social security from an international perspective. The survey will be presented March 1, 2016. Socialdepartementet, “Kommittédirektiv: Svensk social trygghet i en internationell värld”, (S 2014:109), Regeringskansliet, July 17, 2014. Accessed April 13, 2016, www.regeringen.se/contentassets/5645d41f1008497ca90349eedc06efae/dir.-2014109-svensk-social-trygghet-i-en-internationell-varld.
70.  Socialstyrelsen, “Ny kartläggning av hemlöshet bland EU-migranter”, May 28, 2013. Accessed April 13, 2016, socialstyrelsen.se/nyheter/2013maj/nykartlaggningavhemloshetblandeu-migranter.
71.  Hansen, 220.
72.  Liedman, 25.
73.  Liedman, 28.
74.  The market survey clearly demonstrates that those who beg must be “the deserving poor” for givers to be inclined to give them money, that their begging is a temporary emergency situation.
75.  On January 29, 2015 the Swedish government decided to appoint a special investigator to serve as a national coordinator and support to authorities, municipalities, counties, and organizations that encounter vulnerable EEA citizens temporarily resident in Sweden, meaning for no more than three months, and who do not have right of residency (Dir 2015:9). The same day former secretary of state Martin Valfridsson was appointed National coordinator for vulnerable EU citizens (S 2015:01). The survey was presented on February 1, 2016.
Nationell samordnare för utsatta EU medborgare, *Framtid sökes – Slutredovisning från den nationella samordnaren för utsatta EU-medborgare*, (SOU 2016:6), Statens Offentliga Utredningar, (Stockholm: Elanders AB, 2016.) Accessed April 27, 2016, www.regeringen.se/contentassets/b9ca59958b5f43f681b8ec6dba5b5ca3/framtid-sokesslutredovisning-fran-den-nationella-samordnaren-for-utsatta-eu-medborgare-sou-2016_6.pdf.
76.  “According to government directives the coordinator shall promote exchange of experiences and collaboration between concerned parties in Sweden, promote contacts between operators in Sweden and in the home countries of the vulnerable EU citizens and spread information about the rights of EU citizens when they’re in Sweden without right of residency.” Ibid., 7–8.
77.  “A foundation has been laid for future collaboration between most of the Swedish organizations on the ground. It’s important that their work aims to create lasting change for the vulnerable EU citizens. It’s also important to see them as resourceful and fully capable people. As is having a previous understanding of their history in their home countries and the current situation of minorities there.” Ibid., 83.
“Collaborations can be developed at the national, regional, as well as local levels. Sweden should contribute to increased collaboration within the EU. [...] involve Swedish non-profit organizations that have a comprehensive strategy and tested method to their work in Bulgaria and Romania. Four main areas that must be improved in order to lift a group out of poverty are: education, health, access to work, and structural reforms.” Ibid., 87–8.
78.  Ibid., 126.

79. ☞ Per Wirtén writes: “Who would question the suitability of a French single parent who is a professor bringing their kids with them and enrolling them in a Swedish school? Closing the schoolhouse doors specifically to poor children smacks of supranational class politics and a regression to the ‘gypsy policy’ of the 1950s.”
Per Wirtén, “Mänskliga rättigheter på undantag”, *Dagens Arena*, February 2, 2016. Accessed, April 27, 2016, www.dagensarena.se/opinion/manskliga-rattigheter-pa-undantag/.
80. ☞ The coordinator recommends giving to charities rather than directly to the person begging on the street, while other advocates, Hans Swärd among them, maintain that “by counseling people to not give money to beggars the government coordinator is both disqualifying the decision made by the EU migrants to make their way out of a tough situation as well as underestimating the relationship that actually emerges between the beggar and the giver and the fact that it actually can lead to improvements for the poor person and their family.”
Hans Swärd, “Tiggeriförbud har aldrig löst problemet”, *Lunds Universitets Magasin*, April 28, 2016. Accessed May 5, 2016, www.lum.lu.se/tiggeriforbud-har-aldrig-lost-problemet/.
Then there are those who take the debate a step further and call for an investigation of the system that is expected to set the structures, like the authors of “The EU Migrant Debate as Ideology” They want to problematize the welfare state and: “establish solidary forms for organizing and mobilizing that establish and strengthen social bonds between groups that today are separated into ‘deserving’ or ‘non-deserving’”.
Hanna Bäckström, Johan Örestig, Erik Persson, “The EU Migrant Debate as Ideology”, *Eurozine*, June 15, 2016, 2. Accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2016-06-15-orestig-en.html>, 8.
81. ☞ “An act performed by someone, in other cases than those mentioned previously in this chapter, out of necessity constitutes a crime only if it, taking into account the nature of the danger, the harm caused to others, and the circumstances in general, is inexcusable. Necessity occurs when there is a danger to life, limb, property, or some other important aspect protected by the legal system.”
Brottsbalk 24 kap. “Om allmänna grunder för ansvarsfrihet” 4§, (1994:458). Accessed August 3, 2016, http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/brottsbalk-1962700_sfs-1962-700.
82. ☞ An expression that exists in many languages. *Necessitas non habet legem* in Latin, an idiom credited to St. Augustine (5th century), philosopher, rhetorician and one of the most translated medieval authors. *Necessity has no law*; *La necesidad no conoce leyes*. In Arabic الضرورات تبيح المحظورات.
83. ☞ Ulrika Sandberg, “Straffrättslig nödrätt”, (Thesis in criminal law, Faculty of Law, Lund University), 13. Accessed April 27, 2016, <https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=2293402&fileId=2342902>.
- 84, 87. ☞ Ibid., 8.
85. ☞ Ibid., 11.
86. ☞ Ibid., 15.
88. ☞ “Approximately a hundred thousands watts of red lights have been installed in the Cupola of the Marché Bonsecours, a landmark monument in the old Montreal. Detonating devices have been placed in the Accueil Bonneau, la Maison Eugénie Bernier and la Maison Paul Grégoire, homeless shelters located within 500 yards of the Cupola. Every time a homeless person enters any of these shelters, they are free to push the buttons and the red light will flash in the Cupola.” *Lights in the City*, 1999, Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal. Accessed, April 26, 2016, www.alfredojaar.net.
89. ☞ I differentiate between “the political” and current policy, for example in chapter 7 I write about the choral

arrangement: “The political happens every day, between people in our surroundings who share our existence.”

And in this chapter, the last sentence in §5:

“The begging on the streets challenges the reigning EU policy, it raises questions about how the distribution should happen. The giving on the streets challenges the same policy and raises the same essential questions.”

Cecilia
Parsberg

Search:

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Borders

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Notes

Staged Work { BORDER }

Chapter 6: Staged Work (an animated film)

BORDER

6.1 BORDER – We are losers and you have to learn from us

1.

The humiliation was so great that if I'd lingered I would have been completely subsumed, but I grew a shell, at times it protects me, at times it hinders me. I know that voids can't exist without borders. Borders demarcate spaces.

As most people, I have set up limits around my inner self. Without these limits I'm vulnerable.

In *The Fragility of Goodness*, American philosopher Martha Nussbaum writes: "Human cognitive limits circumscribe and limit ethical knowledge and discourse; and an important topic 'within' ethical discourse must be the determination of an appropriate human attitude towards those limits."¹ In my first encounter with the begging man I didn't begin by parsing what I didn't understand, there was no desire to know more – that came later.

Everything about giving and begging stands between us. I want to reveal the spaces between people. But what if there is no space? What if there's a chasm, or a wall? Do I need to transcend that first? How?

BORDER is a two-minute animation with a text by Mara Lee.² "She who's never trembled when she's passed a border doesn't know what it is to be human," writes Mara Lee.³ This sentence moves me deeply. In earlier works I've documented the Israeli wall on the border with the West Bank.⁴ Back then, in the spring

of 2002 I started to draw two people, one on each side of a wall, people who begin to vibrate, eventually the wall cracks, is pulverized, and rebuilt, cracks to powder and is rebuilt – it's a loop. It's about two people who vibrate out of desire, they get to know each other, the wall comes down, but in the negotiations of desire the need to differentiate, to set limits, grows and so the situation becomes polarized and a new wall is built. The animation is also about the space between us as the place where the negotiation, the precursor to contact happens. One becomes vulnerable in that negotiation of limits. I finished this animation in 2013 and it turned out to also be about the distance between me and the person begging, a distance demarcated by a number of ethical quandaries.

When I tremble before the unknown I tremble before the change that could befall me. To activate the crossing of the border, movements must be performed contrary to accustomed patterns of identification, new patterns of movement must be generated, a new choreography. Marcia Sá Calvacante Shuback says: "The word dance originates from trembling or quivering."⁵

A gestalt therapist discovered that my left eye wasn't active at all, so I was given exercises to perform daily. In the beginning the exercises would make me tremble, as if I was freezing. It was embarrassing, I'd be speaking with someone at work I would at times need to excuse myself or go to the bathroom until I'd stopped shaking. Over time I trained my left eye to see actively.

2.

"We are losers, and you have to learn from us," says Kefah, a poet living in the Israeli-occupied territories on the West Bank. To occupy is a method of besetting a space, an area, the property of another. Israel has built its wall to demarcate occupied territory, and to control and prevent movement between the occupied and the inhabitants of Israel proper. The wall is Israel drawing its limit, Israeli law. In 2006 the International Tribunal in The Hague decreed the wall to be in violation of international law.

Many Israelis see the wall as protection against what they fear might happen if it wasn't there. The wall is physical as well as mental. It originated as an idea, it was visualized, sketched, planned, and then projected and built. The wall is the outcome of decisions based on experience. Despite the decree of The Hague Tribunal it would appear that an international moral code supports the wall, by virtue of not actively trying to repeal it, it also condones the occupation.

When Palestinian Kefah says: "We are losers, and you have to learn from us" he is suggesting a less common way of looking at the relating and teaching

of them or that which can't be excluded and controlled. He's a poet, a poet under occupation. His view of the wall is that it prevents possibilities to relate and thus build communities. He maintains that the wall is a break in a movement, that this demarcation is a law that fractures the development of community.

The community of wall builders provides the basis for a production of knowledge that is disseminated, as is the community of the occupied. Kefah calls himself and his occupied community – which is surrounded by the wall – *losers*. Because they have been defeated by a victorious power. But the winners don't possess all of the knowledge. He is saying that the knowledge of the *losers* is unavoidable. He is saying: We lost, but if your strength, your victory, your success is built on us losing, then we're in your lives, in your actions, in your knowledge production to the same, or perhaps a greater, extent. "We are losers, and you have to learn from us."

3.

When I visit Kefah he teaches me: To only relate *against*, means obliterating one's own agency in a dependency, to let oneself be occupied. He teaches me to relate *to*, be close, on the side of, around, by, and turn values around, to see spaces around that which is visible. It's about autonomy and stance. Dignity, to give worth, to receive worth, worth cannot be taken. Like when women in my home country demanded the right to vote, to be seen, heard, and spoken to, to receive a response from society, an acknowledgement that one exists, to receive worth. They demanded that images of women change. Women were the occupied territory of prevailing knowledge. Counting women's knowledge as knowledge was a struggle against subordination that was fought by attending to one's worth. That struggle was just as much about attending to the knowledge that is considered worth promoting.

There are days when I can't see my face in the mirror (my self portrait looks like an oxidized and shaken charcoal drawing, the sharp features are nearly erased)⁶⁾ in part because I can't grasp how others see me, in part because I can

no longer act the way I always have. My limits and contours have been moved and must be redrawn. It is a phase of confusion, an uncertainty that lasts until a new position can be invented.

In *Frames of War* Judith Butler writes that what may finally be true of us is that: "The subject that I am is bound to the subject I am not, that we each have the power to destroy and to be destroyed, and that we are bound to one another in this power and this precariousness. In this sense, we are all precarious lives."⁷⁾

It is only in the encounter with others that my contours can be redrawn and I can become aware of which limits I need and which I don't. And I know that I don't want to become hardened, die with a hard body that only softens in the flesh, I want to be receptive. My work can be seen as a preparation for such encounters, mine and others.

6.2 Mind the Gap Between Begging and Giving!

1.

Your body on the street is in my way. You are in my way!

I'm used to walking here. Go away, you bother me! I don't want to bend, and even if I do I'm resistant – are you making it hard for me to bend, did you get into my muscles? Are you the obstacle? What "prevents" me from you? Are you a sham? Are you a lie? I've paid my taxes. I'm honest. I don't understand – I don't know the way you sit, you sit like one who's subservient and I'm not. Just to my boss, but I don't beg. Ah, I understand, you don't know what I know. Or are you deceiving me? Perhaps you're part of a mafia and have more power than I could ever imagine? Perhaps you're really the one with the power, are you manipulating me? I sense something at work here that I can't see. Why are you kneeling? Are you kneeling before me? Why? Why do you accept it?

Why don't you protest? Are you letting someone push you down? What force? Why should I participate in this, I don't see anyone here who's responsible. Get up! Why are you putting me in this position, it's irritating. Is this free movement? If so freedom is a lie by those who decreed this movement. I can't stand it, what keeps me together? It's violent. Where can I complain? What should I protest?

Structural inequalities have to do with our images and attitudes; these “images”, collective as well as individual, visual as well as verbal – are at play in society. This is how the political is connected to the aesthetic. Reluctance, or desire to include, generates images, ideas of one another.

2.

Ignorance also creates. Ignorance also creates images. The Sweden Democrats’ billboard campaign during the run-up to the EU election read: “It’s time to stop organized begging on our streets.”

The billboards spread an image of begging as criminal. Within the body politic the law is intended to stop activities that are considered illegal. Within the framework of current policy business in the form of organized entrepreneurship is seen as fruitful and desirable. But once the word “stop” is placed in front of “organized” begging becomes something threatening, something that one must distance oneself from. The benevolent giver feels they are being conned, a menacing organization is behind the begging we see on the streets. The Sweden Democrats (SD) appear to be the defender of justice that has come to save the citizens.

Around the same time signs – by an unknown poster – appeared in subway cars in Stockholm: “Mind the gap between facts and prejudice” and “Be aware of racism, the doors are closing.”

How to negotiate this gap?

I have so many images that prevent me from seeing you as human. I may see you as one of the Roma and then I must try to understand the problem of ethnicity. Or I may see you as a migrant who must be integrated into Swedish structures and then I must try to understand migration policy. Mind the gap between begging and giving people! Between begging and giving!



Slussen, Stockholm July 2014. Photo: P-O Sännås.



Stockholm Subway, July 2014.

3.

A way of relating that could be regarded as benevolent, is to view a begging person as a potential resource, or manpower, which a group in the Swedish town of Gnosjö chose to do in the fall of 2014. “Among other things the group of volunteers has helped the beggars bake bread that they sell. They also sell chanterelle mushrooms, lingonberries and work with splitting and packing firewood. Putting money in their cup doesn’t solve the problem it just kicks it down the road. – Entrepreneurship, business and a new way of thinking is necessary, they need to make a living, says Mats Johansson, another one of the citizens of Gnosjö who’s helping out.”⁸⁾ On March 3 they received the Faktum Gala award for inclusivity. On February 12 *Smålandsnytt*, a local paper, reports:

“According to the aid group the Roma were given money when they returned home before Christmas, the money was intended to last them so that they could be home with their children over the winter. But within weeks the Roma were back on the streets of Gnosjö, [...] According to Mats Johansson they feel entitled to the money that the aid group has collected with the intention of launching aid work in Romania. He says that the beggars have demanded one hundred thousand kronor from the aid group. [...] ‘We get that they don’t think the way we do. They are suspicious in ways we could never have imagined. – Expectations and cultures have clashed. But there are so many other things that have happened in the longer-term perspective on site in their village and their municipality that would never have come to be if we hadn’t met these friends. They’ve become ambassadors and eye-openers to us. [...] We must ask the question; what do we want our aid to do?’”⁹⁾

The problem doesn’t seem to be just begging, but giving too, or is it the interaction itself? SD wants to solve the problem by prohibiting begging. The citizens of Gnosjö want to solve it through work and education. The latter appear to want to continue investigating the problem. They’re going to continue the process and state purposes to their giving. They create a space to act together with the begging people who need to beg due to various reasons pertaining to time, situation, and causes, resulting in an interaction through giving. But negotiation is necessary to create agency. *Värnamo Nyheter*, a local paper, reports on a letter sent by Mats Johansson to all the participants in Gnosjö where he relates that some of the people who beg have expressed the view that the citizens of Gnosjö have prevented them from begging. “Among other things he writes: ‘This had to do with various demands for more money, disappointment, anger, and expressions such as the help they’ve been given not being help at all because they’d had to work’.”¹⁰⁾ These are opinions expressed by a few – not all – of those who beg, but it can be seen as an example of an encounter between different value systems. Negotiating two value systems isn’t easy, especially not when money is involved and there is a power imbalance between the negotiating parties. If begging has been the only source of sustenance for the poor person it would be reasonable to see it as a safe, or at least an accustomed way of making a living. For the citizens of Gnosjö the same thing connotes a precarious existence. Images of safety and the lack thereof are rarely mutual.¹¹⁾

4.

There is a form of control inherent to *how the aid is organized* and it is paradoxical that *the aid* sets the terms and in the worst case institutionalizes (affirms) a hierarchy of power, in which the person who is aided is victimized and subordinated. Of course there is also

aid in which the organization and entrepreneurship of the poor set the terms for what type of aid is needed. The question for me, in this project, is how the artist's – my – framing can be challenged when I aim to make visible the situation of giving and begging. I receive an email from Kultur i Väst [Culture in Western Sweden] and experiment with swapping in the words *artist* and *cultural worker* for *poor*. I also swap in *art* for *survival practice*. I want to test my own images by changing a rhetorical context (in a way that is similar to how Ioana Cojocariu tests how values are tied to a prostrate position by changing the context from the street to a yoga studio). What's regarded as creative and groundbreaking in one context is a method of survival in another.

Poor people coming together, joining forces and cooperating isn't new. But around Europe and in Sweden people are beginning to speak of self-organizing as

a vital force and an important part. So this fall we at Kultur i Väst initiated the work of investigating if there's any interest in starting and operating a cluster for self-organization among the independent practitioners in the region. What is it and could such a cluster play a role in our region? What is a cluster for self-organization and is it needed? The small-scale self-organized activities often represent the first step in the ecosystem of the poor through fast hybrid methods of working and informal networks.

They also bring contemporary professional survival practice to smaller communities where no other contemporary survival practice exists, through deep and participant-based interest in the site. In this way they contribute to both the development of survival practice and to social debates outside large urban areas.

The symposium raises questions about autonomy, commons, and the relationship between self-organizing and the survival practice. The goal is that by focusing on the worth and networking potential of the self-organized one might create a context for inspiration, tools, and opportunities for exchange of experience and knowledge for others than those directly involved.”¹²⁾

5.

In the conversation about the poor expressions like *increased social participation* and *autonomy* are often used.¹³⁾ The question on the table is what those words can mean in practice and how those things can be achieved without aid work. The images we have of one another must be made visible and negotiated – and thus tested – since they are currently causing violence against people. They are “our” images, the images created through objectification of others – when others are (solely) instrumental to each other. When someone else is (solely) instrumental to me there's an emptiness. At times I even do this to my acquaintances in my everyday life. Working through one's attitudes to others is a constant, ongoing process.¹⁴⁾

The Romani mayor of Gradinari says: “Nobody's ever asked the Roma what they want, not during the Ceausescu regime in Romania, not after Ceausescu, and not in Sweden. The assumption is always that Roma do what others have planned for them. They are a problem to be solved.”¹⁵⁾ The political question is how aid to those in need can be anchored in their life, in a reality that may seem different and nearly impossible to understand. How are they supposed to speak to each other, listen and create discretion? Or put another way: How can images be made of events, how can images be made with others? *To see images is an act*; the images in circulation must be constantly renegotiated and that can't happen if new images aren't produced. Mind the gap between begging and giving people? Between begging and begging? Between giving and giving!

6.3 Resonance – a story from my life

That I am an agent, but also a plant; that much that I did not make goes towards making me whatever I shall be praised or blamed for being;

that I must constantly choose among competing and apparently incommensurable goods and that circumstances may force me to a position in which I can't help being false to something or doing something wrong; that an event that simply happens to me may, without my consent, alter my life; that it is equally problematic to entrust one's good friends, lovers, or country and to try to have a good life without them – all these I take to be just the material of tragedy, but everyday facts of lived practical reason.
(Martha Nussbaum)¹⁶⁾

1.

I subordinate myself to the tragedy, get on my knees before what's happening and can't be controlled, it's a seemingly passive physical act, a form of contemplation to gather strength.

My mother was 63 years old when she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. She understood what it would mean – simply put she would lose all the abilities that you acquire early in life and she would become dependent on medicine. The important thing was that she had a context, she had us. She died fifteen years later. Over these fifteen years I felt resistance each time I went to visit her and was scared, not of visiting her in the environment that seems to be the final one of life – routines, diaper changes, fruit soup, the smell of urine, other unreachable old people who smelled bad and cried out for help in their dementia – but because I knew she'd have deteriorated more each time. At each visit I wrote down what happened; she was eaten up from the inside, physically and mentally, the moments in which she was able to be present kept getting shorter. But every time

I was on my way to her I decided, actively, to see what I did get and not what I didn't get. That helped me conquer my fear. And she fought. When her ability to discern shapes disappeared she saw the color green rather than a tree. When she lost her ability to discern color – one by one, the last color she saw was red – she still enjoyed the familiar taste of strawberries. When speech disappeared she sang, when words disappeared she made noises, when she couldn't dance anymore, she twitched, she wanted to communicate! even if she couldn't reach us. It could take her hours to break out of "her world". But eventually we'd make contact. It happened in various ways. Once when she came walking down the hallway she didn't recognize me; I hugged her and said my name, which she didn't recognize either, but then she inhaled my scent¹⁷⁾ and a *yees* emerged from far inside her body. That was a great moment, it didn't matter that she no longer knew my name, that she couldn't remember our shared history. The moments of contact became increasingly brief and the space between them kept getting longer, but when they happened it was infinitely meaningful.

2.

Contact is something that happens, something that is received and taken. It can be heard and felt. If there is trust. And will. It can't be described. Swedish translator Joachim Retzlaff's prologue to Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* reads: "Language characterizes the human as a social being. Because use of language assumes mutual understanding, that is to say a minimum of intersubjectivity."¹⁸⁾ When my mother lost the ability to communicate, she died.

*Many times and in many places I've experienced that it's possible to make contact despite different languages; a sort of resonant space has emerged between us. We belong to the same tribe, said Palestinian poet Kifah Fanni in a conversation about why it's sometimes possible to communicate on a level that seems to be beyond words, that rejects national borders and cultural differences.*¹⁹⁾

If we want it, he added. Love comes with its own delimitations. And that is what I investigate in this thesis, perhaps that's all I want and long for, humanity, contact. The rest is a failure of realizing capability as function.

According to Martha Nussbaum freedom is inherent to the term "capability" (in this story: to discern form, color, scent, sound, to speak, dance, sing etc.) She maintains that capability is the possibility of choosing and that functions are realizations of capabilities.²⁰⁾ "Functions are beings and doings that are the outgrowths of realizations of capabilities."²¹⁾ One could say that in a society where people are involved in functions the function is the final goal of the capability. "But capabilities have value in and of themselves, as spheres of freedom and choice."²²⁾

3.

Many years ago I saw a light installation by the composer Alvin Lucier who used a number of instruments and recording equipment to show how we create vibrations in the air, sound waves, by moving in relation to one another. In this way we move in a resonance box,

indoors as well as in the social space, and despite the matrix and structural delimitations we can reason or resonate with one another. A friend expressed it like this: “Philosophy is slow in comparison to visual art, which is slow in comparison to music. Sound travels the fastest.” Can sound actually be faster than light at times?

When I'm not there, in the resonant space, when I fail to be in the resonance, it's a question of life support, a just about, an adding and subtracting to make sense. I'm not entirely aware of when I enter and leave these spaces, but when I am there I have clear thoughts – I sense, know – a tone sounds right though the meanings. When the tone is received it happens – contact.

“Resonance sets into motion and sustains all creative processes. [...] The inhaling and exhaling is the work of rhythm, or of Breath, manifested as voice, sound, word – whether audible or silent, spoken or written, outside or within.” writes Trinh T. Minh-ha.²³⁾

I can't see voids, I can see the borders, I can't depict voids, I can depict borders. I can see traces and spaces. And I can hear voices – I listen to voices that want to be heard across borders.





I think about what Martha Nussbaum wrote: that capabilities and freedom of choice are connected.²⁴⁾ By highlighting certain capabilities in a choreography – in a trusting environment – the function could be made visible that is a precondition for other functions to change: communication. I start planning a film installation with a chorus of beggars standing opposite a chorus of givers; initially I call it *Voices across Borders*.

Chapter 6: Borders Notes

1. 📖 Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 8.
2. 📖 **BORDER** (animated film, 2:10 min).
3. 📖 Mara Lee, “... sa hon och darrade”, *Glänta* No. 2 (2011).
4. 📖 Cecilia Parsberg, “The Wall”, ceciliaparsberg.se/thewall/.
5. 📖 Calvacante gave a lecture at Weaving Politics, which was a research seminar at Dansens Hus in Stockholm, arranged by Christina Caprioli, December 14–16, 2012.
6. 📖 Or does my face look like the portraits artist Carl Erik Hammarén painted in the late 1970s and early 1980s? Or like the work of Lena Cronqvist where she portrays herself as a child and as memories of her childhood in painting after painting, or possibly like Frida Kahlo whose self-portraits express various frames of mind?
7. 📖 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009), 43.
8. 📖 Fredrik Tideman, “Gnosjö sluter upp för att ge tiggarna en bättre tillvaro”, *Metro*, September 26, 2014. Accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.metro.se/nyheter/gnosjo-sluter-upp-for-att-ge-tiggarna-en-battare-tillvaro/EVHniz!nkJj81V1zs5Y/>.
9. 📖 Kristin Renulf, “Konflikt när tiggarna återvände till Gnosjö”, *SVT Nyheter*, February 12, 2016. Accessed April 27,

- 2016, www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/smaland/konflikt-nar-tiggare-atervande-till-gnosjo.
10. 📖 Emilia Lindholm, “Brev om tiggare väcker känslor”, *Värnamo Nyheter*, February 18, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016. www.varnamonyheter.se/artikel/125248/brev-om-tiggare-vacker-reaktioner.
 11. 📖 Social capital can work differently in both communities. Social capital can be understood as “community spirit in the form of intrahuman bonds created and maintained by civil society”. When these community cultures meet misunderstandings arise. They have different images of begging and giving. Glenn Svedin, *En ohyra på samhällskroppen*, (Höör: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 2015). Accessed April 27, 2016, <http://miun.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:812217/FULLTEXT02.pdf>.
 12. 📖 The original reads (italicized bold letters were swapped out): “*Artists and cultural workers* coming together, joining forces and cooperating isn’t new. But around Europe and in Sweden people are beginning to speak of self-organizing as a vital force and an important part. So this fall we at Kultur i Väst initiated the work of investigating if there’s any interest in starting and operating a cluster for self-organization among the free practitioners in the region. What is it and could such a cluster play a role in our region? What is a cluster for self-organization and is it needed? The small-scale self-organized *art* activities often represent the first step in the ecosystem of *art* through fast hybrid methods of working and informal networks.
They also bring contemporary professional *art* to smaller communities where no other contemporary *art* exists, through participant-based and deep interest in the site. In this way they contribute to both the development of *art* and to social debates outside large urban areas.
The symposium raises questions about autonomy, commons, and the relationship between self-organizing and the *art* practice. The goal is that by focusing on the worth and networking potential of the self-organized one might create a context for inspiration, tools, and opportunities for exchange of experience and knowledge for others than those directly involved.”
 13. 📖 “The overarching goal for FEAD is that persons in a socially vulnerable position will have increased social participation and autonomy. More specifically this primarily concerns EU and EEA citizens that are in Sweden for shorter periods of time.” FEAD, “Nationell utlysning: Fead-insatser 2015–2018”, (Dnr 2015/00364), April 30, 2015. Accessed May 10, 2016, www.esf.se/Documents/Våra%20program/FEAD/Utlysning/Utlysning%20Fead%202015.pdf.
 14. 📖 On April 1, 2015 I wrote a text message to one of the people I dance tango with: “For me it’s about meeting others (a friend, a man, a dance partner) who also has visions, who understands that we’re not (solely) instrumental to each other – just there to meet daily needs – but that we’re creative beings. There is a dimension beyond what we’re doing together (that’s the difference between doing dance moves and dancing!) I’ve always thought this way with you – it’s fun as long as it lasts. But it just creates emptiness! Instead of opening up possibilities and continuations. Another person mustn’t become instrumental – according to my morals – if so I’m objectifying her. I lose all meaning in life were I to do that. And the adventure of meeting another person. Everything that’s going on that can be discovered (the invisible, the sensual, the things I don’t understand, the things I only suspect...) – that which makes it possible for me to create myself as well! And it’s not romantic thinking, it’s human thinking! To not objectify each other, people are organic beings. The patriarchal view of woman is objectification and refusing to comply is to be human. But I find myself caught up in the threads of these power structures that wrap me up and connect me to others...”
 15. 📖 Karin Petterson and Anders Lindberg, “Ledare: På plats i Rumänien”, *Aftonbladet*. Accessed April 27, 2016, www.story.aftonbladet.se/rumanien.
 16. 📖 Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, (“Aeschylus and practical conflict”), (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.
 17. 📖 Maria Larsson, professor of psychology at the University of Stockholm says that the sense of smell is the oldest of our five senses. Among other things it helps us feel safe. She has studied the connection between scent, memory, and feelings. The feelings aroused by a scent memory are more powerful than sight and sound memories, especially from childhood.
 18. 📖 Hannah Arendt, *Människans Villkor*, transl. Joachim Retzlaff, (Gothenburh: Daidalos, 1998), 17.
 19. 📖 Caribbean poet and cultural theorist Édouard Glissant expresses it in a similar way: “To the contrary the commons of which I speak relate to an intuition that can be experienced everywhere, it is spread across the surface and belongs to that in the world that doesn’t let itself be explored and the endless conditions that creates, a ‘universally’ acknowledged and spread but very particularly experienced intuition, which spreads and emerges in all places, and mainly resembles the poetics of difference. A poetics that trusts the never ending expressions of intuition and ability to get closer to other intuitions, closer to the relation, closer to the difference, which shares its life forces.” Translated from the Swedish: Édouard Glissant, *Relationens filosofi. Omfångets poesi*, (Gothenburg: Glänta 2012.) 35.
 20. 📖 She gives the following example:
“A person who is starving and a person who is fasting have the same type of function where nutrition is concerned, but they don’t have the same capability, because the person who fasts is able not to fast, and the starving person has no choice.”

Martha C. Nussbaum *Creating Capabilities. The Human Development Approach*, (New York: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 25.

21.  Ibid., 25.
22.  “In one standard formulation by Sen, ‘a person’s capability’ refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations.’ In other words, they are not just abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social and economic environment.” Ibid., 21.
23.  Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 57.
24.  Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 20.
In her book Martha Nussbaum proposes a model of capability that would: “insist that the political goal for all human beings in a nation ought to be the same: all should get above a certain threshold level of combined capability, in the sense not of coerced functioning but of substantial freedom to choose and act.”

Cecilia
Parsberg

Search:

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Voices

7.1 On the production of *The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving*

7.2 On Symmetry and Asymmetry in *The Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving*

Notes

Staged Work { The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving }

Chapter 7: Staged Work (film installation for a space)

The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving

7.1 On the production of *The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving*

The Third is the one who questions me in the face-to-face, who suddenly makes me feel that there's a risk of injustice in the ethical if I do not take into account the other of the other.¹⁾
(Jacques Derrida)

1.



Skövde Konsthall, 2015.

In the spring of 2014 I begin to prepare for the film shoot.²⁾ The Chorus of Begging consists of people who usually beg on the streets. The Chorus of Giving consists of people who usually give to those who beg on the streets.

I see and perceive a physical and mental distance between those kneeling on the streets and the passers-by, between begging and giving. For me this makes answering a begging person's question a highly physical experience. I sense the conflicts in my body when I bend down to give, when I start feeling around for money or don't. I notice how I begin to fumble, tremble, blush, and don't know what to say. I become overloaded and mute.

On the street the obstacles seem both emotional and verbal. Often both parties seem to want to communicate more but can't. And of course there are cultural codes at play between those who beg and those who give or don't give. To give and receive money is often a non-verbal transaction, which is why The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving are going to sing without words. Using their own individual voices as well as their collective chorus voice they are going to attempt to sing the feelings between these begging and giving people.

The choruses will be standing across from each other – about five meters apart – while singing and the setup will be the same when the films are screened as an installation. The viewer will stand between the images and the sound

from The Chorus of Begging and the images and the sound from The Chorus of Giving.

The production had an express purpose though we planned the days of the shoot in terms of logistics there were many unpredictable human factors. The singers in the chorus were inexperienced, as was the production team in this situation, which meant that working on the production involved many aesthetic and ethical choices.

The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving is a film installation in which the viewer stands between the two choruses and listens to voices, sees facial expressions and bodies.

At the top of this chapter I quote Derrida: In this installation the viewer could be said to be *The Third One*, the viewer invited to the installation and who is watching the work in their own life experience, but also the viewer that is always present in one's body, in one's conscious, who guides the choices and decisions one makes in relation to another human.³⁾ When I portray I am also a viewer. I haven't wanted to control the production process, I've wanted to gently guide it step by step, together with the participants, to finally arrive at a finished work.

These are the conditions and this is the process that I want to describe here and in the film *On the Production of the Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving* (which is shown in a room adjacent to the installation).



Skövde Konsthall, 2015.

2.

In the winter of 2012 Leif Eriksson called me – he is a teacher and researcher at The School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg and, I later realize, a key figure when it comes to those who beg in Gothenburg. He had heard me on the radio and we ended up talking about an economy that is becoming increasingly clear in the encounter with the people who are begging on the streets, an economy built on inequality, which we agree is not acceptable. We talked about *exchange* rather than *to help*. How might this work?

Two months later we meet in Gothenburg, he drives me around and tells me how he's been spending his spare time the last six months.⁴⁾ We get out of the car at Hjalmar Brantingsplatsen and he shows me a hole in the concrete under the bridge by Hjalmar Brantingsgatan. He says:

– I got angry. In November I taught an M.A. class on social exclusion in which we among other things looked at homelessness and the processes that are taking place in Gothenburg in relation to the global system. We had homeless people come to the class and tell their stories. One thing led to another and some time in late November when it got very cold I had enough. I've arranged a number of campers and parking permits for a group of EU mobile people who've come here. I work half time, so this is something I do in my spare time. They pay for the campers, I buy them and handle the

paperwork here in Sweden.⁵⁾ Recently Leif has also started an organization through which those who beg can find work.⁶⁾

Three months later and a few weeks before recruiting The Chorus of Begging (May 2014) I meet Leif again. I've asked to see him because I want his response and support. But before this I've described my idea to several others, Aaron Israelsson, editor-in-chief at *Faktum*, among them. Aaron tells me that they hire as many of the EU mobile people who beg as possible on the condition that they take a Swedish course, and that there's a long wait list. Aaron listens to my idea and doesn't protest, but I can't tell how he feels about it. I hope I'm not on the wrong path I think, a bit nervous about what Leif is about to say. I am going to ask him to help me recruit singers for the chorus.

When we meet Leif is quiet for a long time, he just sits and listens. As I talk, his body language conveys skepticism. I say that art is another way of expressing the sensual and that the political is also based in the sensual, in people's emotions and reactions. I give him my view of the interaction between those who beg and those who give or choose not to give. I tell him that I think that this kind of artwork can illuminate a dimension of the ongoing drama. The givers' feelings are heard and noticed, only very few people who beg have been given space in the media and they haven't expressed their feelings as strongly as the givers, nor have they done so in my interviews. The givers appear to be having a constant internal conflict, and in the cases where no deeper reflection happens, it's just isolated incidents that lose meaning and the problem is shunted onto those who beg and onto their home countries. Why is there not more interest in finding out why the givers have such strong feelings? I say that I think the system has made its way into our bodies somehow, that people's emotions constitute a playing field for the market of selling goods and services. That's not news to be sure, that's what a market researcher does for a living. But what happens if the givers' feelings end up in the hands of strategic party platforms? Or what happens if the situation becomes "normalized", becomes a part of a social body politic and accepted as the status quo. I notice my own basic understanding of equality losing touch with the reality on the street. A kind of violence is becoming commonplace.

– Leif, I understand that you're outraged. You want to try to see what the possible paths to action are between you as a giver and the person who begs. One can learn a lot from drama. The palpable and physically sensual experience in the encounters between the begging and the giving penetrates deeply into people's logic, intuition, and political ideology.

In the end Leif Eriksson answers:

– Here's what I think. For those of us who grow up never having to face acute problems of vulnerability, even if one has good intentions – as the people who want to ban giving have – one has to remind oneself that one doesn't know what the fallout might be of this kind of art project. The key question is: What is their compensation for this kind of work?

– One hundred kronor an hour, which is what I'm paid after taxes.

– It wasn't obvious to me that you were going to pay them. Then that's an entirely different matter to me, you're giving something immediate in return. This will take time, which is in short supply for many of them since they need to beg in various ways in order to make money during the daytime. They have very little spare time and in the time they have they might need to for instance take a course in Swedish for immigrants. ☞

– I completely understand that it's not appropriate to ask them give their free time, nor would it be appropriate to believe anything other than that this is my desire, my idea, I'm the director. The Chorus of Giving won't get paid but The Chorus of Begging will. And it's not equal, because the rest of us in the room all get the same hourly wage. All except for the givers, who must be just that, givers. We discussed this at length while we were preparing and decided that this could create the opportunity to re-evaluate the act of giving. Those who participate in The Chorus of Giving are there because they want to be, because they are especially engaged in the situation on the streets, in the changed atmosphere on the streets, in welfare policy, to investigate the meaning of giving specifically, or whatever it may be. Other than that we all work in one room under the same conditions for these three days. Artisten, the space we're in, also happens to be closed for the summer, so we have the large institution all to ourselves, which contributes to our focus.

From my interviews with about forty people who beg it's clear that most of them notice tone of voice specifically when people answer or address them. They don't understand what people are saying, but they do understand how it is said. Those who beg get reactions every day and at times people turn on them. Some have been yelled at, they don't understand the words, but they know what's meant through tone of voice and gestures. Others mean well, that too is clear from *how* they speak. These are the types of experiences that the choruses are going to try to voice, without words. Music would only serve as an accompaniment, which isn't needed. I want them to sing without words and without music in order to emphasize the *how*.

– Now that you're telling me about this I think you should include Catalin, Leif says. He sings in the church choir in Buzao [a village in Romania], he'll understand what this is about. I'm happy to put you in touch with others as well. I think that art – and that which lies outside the framework of social sciences – is important because it doesn't just deal with the rational, but with feelings, images, interpretations and methods of working through and conveying feelings. As a moderator or director of this project you will be very important in terms of handling what happens in that encounter.

– I have no intentions of acting as a facilitator in this project. Neither do I want to capitalize on the emotions of the participants solely as material for the creation of a product. *During these three days I want everybody in the boat and rowing, nobody gets to stay on the shore.* This is my method because I don't think the work will turn out well if I'm not able to get people to trust me to sing in the choruses, and to participate in practice, and the staging.

When I recruit participants I won't be slapping down a thousand-kronor bill and saying: Do you want to make a thousand kronor and sing? First I want to explain what the project is about and get some kind of response indicating that there's a will and an interest in participating, then I explain that this is paid work and how much it pays. The emphasis is equally – perhaps more – on the process. The tone of voice gives weight to what's said, a tone of voice can cancel the meaning of what's being said. By setting up two choruses to interact with each other, I assume that listening is an act, an observant silence.

I want to see if this idea is viable. At the same time I want to *get* the images rather than *take* them.⁷⁾ If it's possible to create an atmosphere together where everyone has a desire and an interest in trying this thing that nobody's done before, if everybody feels that they've got a stake, are co-creators,

something can happen beyond the given instructions. There is a listener for what each person wants to say. This is my attitude to these three days of production. Is everybody game? We shall see.

Leif and I decided to meet the next evening on Götaplatsen and drive to the three campers on Hisingen. Those who beg work long days and don't get home until eight or nine. The first time I met them – also with Leif and with Carmen Condruz as interpreter – they asked why I didn't want to come to their homes and film their lives and living conditions, or why I don't create a forum where they can talk to Swedes. I told them that I'd been to Romania to meet others as well and that I'd done an interview film with other people who beg on the street and that the type of forum I'd like to create is a space in which giving and begging people can have a task in common and create together.

3. Filming – in practice



Jacobsson Theatre, Artisten, Gothenburg, June 13–15, 2014.

The chorus participants were filmed the entire time – using five cameras – except during breaks. These recordings have been edited into the *Production film*. We had two different stage- and lighting rigs – one for the training and one for the chorus singing. In the latter the choruses stood on choir podiums. Each chorus was filmed using two cameras, one for close-ups and the other for full-body shots of the entire chorus. Four microphones were used for the audio uptake of the singing. We did nine line-ups/shoots of the choruses and of these three takes were cut into two films: one with The Chorus of Begging and one with The Chorus of Giving (these two films were synchronized in the installation).

The participants did not wear any kind of costumes. Clothing is often part

of a scenic, aesthetic production, but not documentaries. I want to emphasize that they aren't actors. The participants weren't there to play someone else. They were going to work. I wanted to eliminate the aesthetics of representation as much as possible. Some in The Chorus of Giving are barefoot, which could be associated with an image of them not having enough money to buy shoes, or having a

certain approach to participating in a physical workshop. My only instruction was that they wear the same clothes three days in a row – otherwise it wouldn't be possible to cut between different takes made on different days.

All participants have signed contracts. The schedule is on the contract as is a release form stating that each participant consents to being filmed.

4. Dramaturgic approach and setup

The basic premise was that everybody must feel safe at all times. If we noticed that someone was falling by the wayside we worked in various ways to include them. It was mainly about building trust. A chorus is teamwork; for instance Anna had a headache the second day so we slowed down the pace for the entire chorus. I started the first day off by saying: *We're all working together in this room. There is no audience during these three days, just us. We are a team. We will be creative, powerful and observant of what needs to be done and work well together. We trust each other and we have total respect for all. We know that we will be filmed the entire time all days.* Improvising singing, in dialogue with another chorus, in a situation where everyone's an amateur and no one has met previously and everyone is being filmed, means that those in front of the camera need to feel safe with those behind the camera. Otherwise nothing will be created, nothing will happen, no one will sing so that it reaches and carries. A director is expected to know when the actor reaches the boundary where contact is made with the viewer. A documentary filmmaker is expected to know when the person being filmed penetrates the lens.

For these three days conditions were more or less equal for everyone in terms of logistics, and nobody had sung in a chorus opposite another chorus consisting of people that they'd never met before. Different life circumstances can create fear and distance but also curiosity, that is part of the drama that plays out on the streets. Sometimes I call this curiosity attraction. I would describe it as a condition in which I want to know more, but it worries me. I am prepared to give up something of my own understanding of the state of things and am also interested in the unknown, in what isn't understood. I experience this as a state of tension, I might tremble before it, but it isn't just fear, just as much attentive

listening. I find it to be a state of focus in which something new can be created, it isn't my own creation, it's something done together with another, it's a synergetic give-and-take. There was that kind of uncertain curiosity in the room – though the participants might describe it in different terms – a state that had to be managed to lead up to the takes of the chorus singing. Which is why we needed some training and exercises.

The first day the choruses did their exercises at different times in order to get to know the others in their group first. Several of the participants felt embarrassed by the unaccustomed task and this way they could get comfortable slowly and mutually.

They started with exercises to warm up their voice and to eliminate gestures so that they would express themselves using only their voice and eyes.

On the second day the groups started out apart; they did their exercises in separate rooms. After a few hours they got to come in and stand on their respective choir podiums. This first take began with 30 seconds of silence; that's a long time to look at one another and the atmosphere in the room became quite loaded. After that they were given a sign to began sounding and singing.⁹⁾

After that the second day was alternately exercises and choir singing. The third day was dedicated mainly to choir singing on the podiums.

The direction of the production was process-guided. Together with my team I made decisions step-by-step in relation to what was necessary to keep the dynamic and focus going. Everybody in the team could suggest how to activate the choruses. Sometimes an exercise was needed for them to feel safe, or to dare, be challenged, or just relax and have fun.

5. Song training

Jenny Roos and Pär Hagström were choir directors, they planned the exercises and led the training. We wanted to leave room for dissonance – the non-euphonic, cacophonous – and for the participants to be able to use their voice for expressions that don't usually count as song.¹⁰⁾ In the introductory letter I wrote: "We work with one mood at a time and will voice variations on feelings. The choir director aligns us. To free our voice and explore our voice potential we do physical exercises together. The goal is to sing our feelings – feelings that exist or that could exist in the encounter with the person who begs and the person who gives – together with others." All chorus participants had been prepared for the task to voice – sing – feelings in their own chorus, which in turn sings in dialogue with the other chorus. They understood that training would be needed, but not how it would work.

One of the voice exercises used concrete situations as a prompt: stories of longing for one's children in Romania, of being spat on, of a loved one dying. Jenny and Pär then guided the participants in finding a sound, a tone, and a short melody, a call or another way of expressing their emotion and repeating this word *mechanically*. At 12:20 minutes into the film, "mechanical voice improvisation", Jenny explains: "I will give you a theme based on a feeling – that we'll talk a bit about first – then one finds a sound that one repeats and together that becomes a song. It's important that you keep it


mechanical. It shouldn't be a song that you create yourself, but a small sound, a part of a larger whole." Jenny continues using an example in which they begin singing their sound to a certain rhythm.

When each person one-by-one – led by a rhythm – repeated their sounds mechanically it became a choir. A choir of individual sounds that originated in a personal association to the same feeling, they were expressing a mood.

Another exercise was "call and response" where Jenny or Pär made a sound, a call, and the participants answered. That was to practice jamming with the other chorus. The production film also shows focus exercises to relax the entire body and feel how the body is a "resonance box" for the voice.

Then in the choir lineup they got to connect their own experiences with the mood that was given to the entire chorus. Jenny and Pär drew the participants' attention to silence as a choice that might help one listen better, focus on what one is doing is transmitted through the gaze, one can close one's eyes or notice someone in the other chorus.

The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving underwent the same training. They were even filmed during the exercises, which prevented the situation from becoming too therapeutic. They had a constant listener – "the viewer" was present. After each exercise there was a *choir lineup* in which the individual feelings would be expressed as a collective chorus on the podiums. The choir lineup contrasted markedly with the more physically active exercises.

In this way the staging of the choral arrangement is based on real events and the personal voice of each participant in relation to the act of *giving and begging*. 

We imagined that three distinct moods would emerge, but what we found after two days was that even aggressiveness/anger (the negative) as well as happiness/joy (the positive) was expressed as melancholy. Overall there was a sadness expressed at the state of things, a longing for it to be better. And even though there was anger over powerlessness and joy at situations in which some type of contact or mutuality had arisen, even these experiences had a melancholy tone. So we decided to spend the fourth day entirely on *melancholia*, spanning anger to joy.

At one point in the production film I tell Jenny that I've promised the participants they'll understand each other. – "Wow, that's no small promise," she answers.

I want to clarify what I mean by that assertion. Understanding is a key concept in this work; I've often had the experience of thinking that I understand, but it isn't until I understand that I don't understand that I really start to listen and pick up on things I didn't know before. When the frame of reference ends, when I don't have mental images – because there are none – I listen more attentively to the person whose experience is different in order to learn something I don't know.

Understanding can be a form of empathy; I can see myself in you and understand your feeling – your sorrow for instance – but I understand your feeling in terms of my own experience of sorrow. In the recording space the attitude was palpably empathetic. In the exercises we asked the participants to refer to their own experiences tied to various feelings or moods, sorrow among others. When someone relates sorrow to the fact that she misses her three children in Romania, I relate it to my mother dying a year ago. We both feel sorrow but our images are different.

When I said that they would understand each other I was talking about the dimension of understanding in which a tone emanates from one's own feeling to the body of another, then resonates with this person's feeling. I don't think it's possible to completely understand another person's entirely different life conditions. I can't truly understand someone who has to beg. But I can connect my feeling to another person's feeling despite our different narratives. It isn't so much about understanding *What*, it's more about *How*.

That's why we asked participants to draw on their own life experiences connected to their own emotions. It's still a construction of sorts but it gets at – as Jenny puts it in the film – a more "real or true feeling" than asking them to imagine their sorrow in general. These are the memories of individual people.

To be sure there was a certain understanding in the Jacobsson Theatre during these three days. An intimacy built over time. In the more social contexts, when we ate, took breaks, drank coffee, and danced, there was a desire to make contact, a search for communication, a curiosity and a sort of attraction – a curious interest. Three interpreters were at the lunch so that everyone would be able to understand what we said to each other. A sense of community emerged between the participants in the chorus.

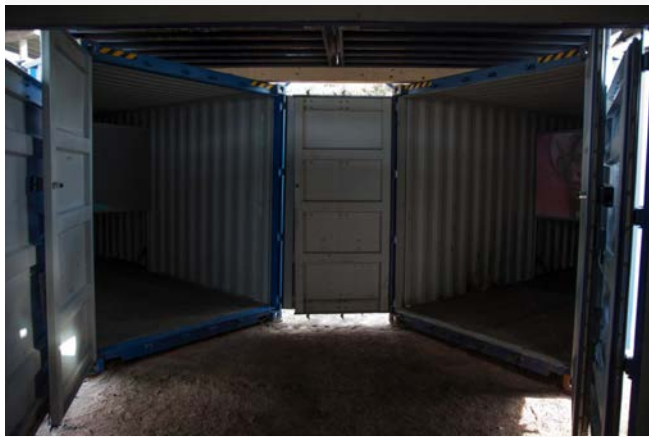
6. Editing

Pär Hagström and I decided which takes and parts of takes to use and we chose by listening – without images – to the soundtracks from the takes. Pär is a musician and served both as choir director and sound technician for this project. One take stood out from the other eight. We added parts of three other takes to it. It ended up being 7:30 minutes long. Pär edited the soundtrack and Kristina Meiton and I edited the images. When we edited the two films in the installation we did it keeping in mind that a viewer would be standing between them – at the same angle that the camera had been shooting – and not be able to see both at once.

7. The first installation

From August 20 to September 14, 2015 six shipping containers were set up by Röda Sten in Gothenburg. The choir dialogue was shown in two of these (see image below). The containers are positioned at an angle corresponding to the positions of the choruses when they were filmed. At times the

participants in the two choruses make eye contact with each other.





In a third container the production film was presented along with this text. There was also a newly written essay on giving and begging in a larger European context, “Giving in Free Movement Europe”.¹²⁾ It had been reviewed by Judith Kiroos “... in free movement Europe we are struggling to manage the system we’ve implemented. As Cecilia Parsberg points out in her investigation of giving and begging in Sweden and Europe – states do their utmost not to attract the ‘wrong’ intra-European migrants. The poor.”¹³⁾



The notes for the installation as a whole were:

The political happens every day, between people in our surroundings who share our existence. That is the premise for my artistic practice. I perceive, with all of my senses, a physical and mental distance between those who kneel on the street and passers-by, between begging and giving people. Here I invite the spectator into that “gap”. A dialogue, or a lack of dialogue is going on between the two choruses, between voices, between facial expressions, and between bodies. The installation “The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving” is an embodiment of this experiential space. A reflection of a situation that many experience every day on our streets. It is my hope that art can make it possible to see such gaps – which seem to be difficult to talk about – as spaces for action; and thus contribute to the possibility of political acts in and about these spaces.

**On the Production of
The Chorus of Begging and
The Chorus of Giving
(53:20 min)**

8. Debrief

I asked all participants for their thoughts afterward, some of them answered.

Leila: “I thought the three days went really well. The actual work was the hard part, I was exhausted. I had preconceived notions about the Givers and heard comments such as ‘Oh, now we’re going to meet the other group, how will that go?’ I thought it sounded like they thought it was difficult, but it turned out great. There was a nice warm atmosphere between the two groups; hugs, everyone cared. It has felt good afterward. Florino and I sometimes work as extras in films and have experience of other productions.”


Florino: “There atmosphere within the group was good, everyone did their best. And it was good for everyone to get paid.”

Marin tells Swedish TV program Kulturnytt: “To create some emotion was wonderful and to meet the people in this group and to meet also the Swedish people – now, we are friends – is very important for us.”¹⁴⁾

Maja writes: “I felt that the three days of shooting were very rewarding but also very demanding. It was galling and complex and difficult and beautiful. I still think it’s very difficult to relate to begging as a phenomenon, and to the begging people I meet on the city streets. I sense that I vacillate between recognition and shutdown when I continue to avert my eyes because I don’t have the emotional energy to engage. I don’t give often, but sometimes (here I have the impulse to justify/explain this, to write ‘I have very little money’). I’ve also spent time thinking about what responsibility I have to ‘see’ people, I don’t feel that I have a responsibility to see, meet, and take in every person I encounter, even if that’s desirable, something to aspire to, so why would I need to do that to a larger extent with the people who beg? I do think that it’s very unfortunate if I meet/take in those people less than others and there’s a risk of that. Generally I have more of a tendency to block out people who want something from me, that’s true of everyone, the people who are recruiting for Doctors Without Borders, peddlers and those who beg. I’d like to think that my view is more nuanced now, that I think more about it, question my own behavior more, my ability to be present and open in relation to this.”

Frej writes: “I’m glad I was part of it, but it was a bit embarrassing, a bit uncomfortable, awkward. I felt that you cared, so that’s not it. I wasn’t used to navigating that kind of situation. There are images and fantasies and prejudices about people who beg and when I encountered their stories I felt ashamed, in part for my own stories and my environment and in part for my stories about them. I saw them. It turned into a meeting of subjects. In the day-to-day there was a distance, I can choose if I want to give five kronor or leave, but here we were encountering one another in an ethical situation. We shared a responsibility.

They were paid and I wasn’t, but I wasn’t there to get paid. Because of that we weren’t colleagues either. We givers were middle and upper class and donated our time to an interesting project. We weren’t meeting as equals. Now I became *the giver* but in relation to a recipient and not to *the beggar*.

It was a situation that took a lot out of me. Not that you used us, that’s not how I felt, but I needed to process it afterward. I felt shame the entire time and afterward too. I still do now when I meet them on the street. Once one has looked each other in the eyes there’s a mutual responsibility. I lost a certain naiveté, an innocence. A door opened and it can’t be closed.” 

Håkan writes: “It was an interesting three days, good days, to meet everyone, get to know each other. It was interesting to try to express feelings using only sounds. I can’t say that my image of the situation in general has changed. I already had the image of those who are here as regular, decent people who are just trying to find a way to survive. I still don’t see begging as a solution, but the begging indicates a problem and hopefully it will provoke thoughts and bring new solutions.”

Gunilla writes: “An amazing time. I participated because I wanted a deeper communication with those who are trying to survive on the city streets, more than just saying hi and helping them with money. Singing in the chorus was a challenge for me since I’d never done it before. The leaders helped us get in touch with our feelings so that we could express them in sounds. I was pretty drained by the time we were done. I’m not very used being so emotionally present for that long.”

Catharina writes:

- It's one of the best things I've experienced and I am thankful for the opportunity to work with a pressing social problem in such an artistic and human way.
- The art project, the research behind it and the existence of a larger goal gave the whole thing a broader framework.
- That this was part of a greater research project, the confidence I felt initially deepened over the days we shot the film, this is important and urgent and shows the potential of artistic research.
- The directorial work was exact, clear, and also searching, while remaining sensitive to the process, a will was expressed and this will catalyzed the participants into giving to each other, giving hope and sharing the predicament of being human and possessing the human capacity to come together.
- I got to encounter the deep-seated fear I apparently have for The Other. It was very valuable to feel it and acknowledge its existence beyond goodwill and Humanist values.

Catharina goes on to say: "The older woman in black, I didn't catch her name, we were drawn to each other during one of the first breaks. We've identified one another as being the two oldest women here. I like that. Now we greet each other, nod and smile. She's shy. But we take each other's hands, hold them, and touch, and look into each other's eyes. Hers are almost black. I ask how she likes being here at Artisten with us. "Bene," she says, and I understand that it means the same in Romanian as it does in Italian: good. I call the interpreter so that we can talk more. The interpreter repeats my question. The woman says, haltingly: It's so... beautiful! And I understand. It is beautiful, us being together like this. The artistic work and its framing makes this possible."

7.2 On Symmetry and Asymmetry in *The Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving*

"[...] right there, in the warmth of the human voice, in the living echo of the past, some primal happiness lies hidden and the inescapable tragedy, the chaos and pathos of life is bared, the singular and the unattainable, there, in the primary sources, they have yet to be reworked."¹⁵⁾
(Svetlana Aleksijevitj)

1.



Väven, Reflektera Konsthall, 2015.

Begging is a call to social interaction. Regardless of whether the giver interacts socially with the (visitor) begging on the street, the giver is implicated in the asymmetrical value system of the EU. These transactions and interactions take place between, and in opposition to, one another, which is why I have arranged the Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving identically – in a symmetrical structure. The two choirs stood about five meters from each other when we shot the film and they are shown the same way – as projections opposite one another approximately five meters apart. This configuration does not become three-dimensional until the viewer steps into the space in between. The scale is calibrated so that a viewer and a member of the choir are about the same size when full body shots of the choir are shown on the screen.¹⁶⁾

Does this mean that I by directing and presenting symmetry – through my symmetrical arrangement – present a false image, a benevolent representation that indicates a sort of equity? Could my arrangement be giving a sense of two troops, soldiers of society, framed into opposition alongside the viewer? Is it a utopia of collaboration, or a dystopia of separation?

Within the matrix of the prevailing system humans are counted and measured according to symmetric meters, however those in the Chorus of Begging aren't quite part of the system and thus haven't been counted by the same meter as those in the Chorus of Giving – that is why I wanted them to be able to stand in the same way (that is also why they have been paid, while the those in the Chorus of Giving have not.)

2.



Väven, Reflektera Konsthall, 2015.

The first reason for the symmetrical choral arrangement is the intention that the chorus of song would be created through interaction. “Co-presence” is a key word. On the streets, in our cities, we move in co-presence, people’s movements are an essential part of how cities function. But co-presence doesn’t necessarily mean that we interact: “Co-presence is not social in itself. In contrast, it makes up the foundation of social interaction (if we by social interaction refer to interactions in physical space – not over the phone or the Internet). And it is with social interaction that the social ‘begins’”, writes cultural geographer Sara Westin.¹⁷⁾

We began with such a “co-presence” and moved on to the interaction between the two choruses – choral singing is a creative endeavor between people which demands presence and togetherness from all participants, it could be said to demand exactly that from its participants which the prevailing political structure does not.

The second reason for the symmetrical arrangement is that I don’t want to depict what’s happening, I don’t want to replicate the physical gestures that play out on the street. The participants, whose bodies and gestures were shaped by the situation on the street, were guarded at the beginning, not so much when it came to singing as when it came to relating to each other. They needed training to unlearn instrumental roles and representations: to unlearn the images they had of each other. This process of unlearning also necessitated de-representation of clothes as well as positions.¹⁸⁾ (My reasoning here was the same as for my decision not to photograph those who beg, just the places where they beg – I don’t want the depiction, but the image itself.¹⁹⁾) I wanted to try to make a new image emerge. My question was and remains: Is there a way for me to wriggle past the rhetoric that so easily traps me in the framework of expectation, to a place in which we do a third thing together. Is this how new images can be generated?

For the viewer of the video installation there are no clues to indicate which chorus is which. The viewers have only been told that one chorus is made up of people who usually beg on the streets and the other of people who usually give to those who beg (the participants are not asked for their ethnicity, citizenship and the like, they’re only asked about this particular activity and this action). Both choruses are arranged in the same formation.

The third reason for the symmetry is what the anthropologist Camilla Ravnboel writes about a ten-month field study of those who beg on the streets of Copenhagen: “They see themselves as being EU-citizens [...] as part of the system”.²⁰⁾ In the same vein Mujo Halilovic, a Ph.D. candidate at Malmö University writes that they themselves want to be seen as citizens like any other and no longer as “the others”.²¹⁾ The symmetry of the choral arrangement attempts to highlight the deficiency that is *experienced* on the street. The viewer is given the opportunity to confront this deficiency when they stand between the two choruses. Judith Butler claims that “a critical practice of thinking [...] refuses to take for granted that framework of identitarian struggle which assumes that subjects already exist, that they occupy a common public space, and that their differences might be reconciled if only we had the right tools for bringing them together.”²²⁾ The configuration intends to suggest such tools.

The fourth reason for the symmetrical formation of the choral arrangement is to depict a form of separation that appears unbridgeable in the urban

space. It is a structural and ethical separation that is inherent to the *situation, position and action*. I wanted to examine what might happen if the separation remains but those begging and those giving perform *situation, position and action* in a different way. I changed the conditions as follows:

- *situation* – they have been subject to the same conditions for three days.²³⁾
- *position* – they are standing up.
- *action* – they are singing with each other.

The viewer is invited into the space that separates them. The seemingly empty space is transformed – in front of the viewer – from glances exchanged in silence, to singing together with the other chorus. This action violates normative understandings of identity, ethnicity, nationality and subject. It's an immaterial space. Sensuality is mediated here. A potentially sensual space lies between giving and begging.

About, for and through: situation, position and action, at once ties together and separates the begging and the giving.

The fifth reason is that the symmetry stages a framing.²⁴⁾ Within social frameworks norms are created for the inter-human, among others those that have to do with who deserves recognition and representation. To some degree giving and begging designate their respective representation and the installation with the two videos opposite each other with the viewer in the middle exemplifies this performative act.

According to the social framework in which the choral arrangement was developed, the question arose if and how I – who in this case inhabit a knowledge-producing position of power – can learn something new from the people I engage. Butler writes further:” “If certain lives are deemed worth living, protecting, and grieving and others not, then this way of differentiating lives cannot be understood as a problem of identity or even of the subject.”²⁵⁾ One way of putting it would be that both the members of the choruses as well as the viewer are invited to negotiate exchange and possible synergy with me as director. Another way of seeing it would be that a film director has simply hired them as chorus singers. Opening up that discussion is one reason why we include a screening of the production video. Author and film curator Tobias Hering writes “*The viewer stands in-between*. For Cecilia Parsberg ‘as a practitioner’, the concern for the in-between is a double concern: The installation *The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving* explores the social space around the mutually related gestures of begging and giving, while it also explores the physical space of its own agency as an installation: the sensual (sound and vision) space created for the viewer, the witness, to step in and partake in the exchange. An installation as a social space, as a way of doing things that affects the way of doing things: an ethical space.”²⁶⁾

3.



Varbergs Konsthall, 2015.

The symmetry in the choral arrangement leaves space for the asymmetrical. The philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas claims that the relationship between myself and the other is inherently asymmetrical. Further, Lévinas claims that the structural has to do with what citizens can do in society, while the ethical is to be understood as anarchical, as it opposes control.²⁷⁾

You and I are radically separate – I don't understand your facial expression in the context of my own experience, because you and I aren't contained in the same notion. But when I meet your face I can enter the state of receiver and giver.

The videos of the choruses cut between showing the entire chorus and close-ups of the faces of chorus participants. During the choral singing they sometimes look at each other, sometimes not. Lévinas stresses that “every individual shall be able to remain individual, an irreplaceable being, as ‘faces’, but without individuals isolating themselves and letting conditionality reign.”²⁸⁾ “But how then can commonality even exist?” asks the Danish philosopher Peter Kemp in an attempt to grasp Lévinas’ thinking. He continues: “According to Lévinas commonality emerges only through one human giving the world to the other, that is by sacrificing it so that it is open to both, and through the freedom to sacrifice conditionality, through which it subordinates itself to the judgment of the other.”²⁹⁾

The choral arrangement takes place in a temporary space, albeit a directed and aestheticized one. Certain directives have been given that pertain to using voice and gaze to interact with one another and with the conductors who are conducting the drama of the choral arrangement. Still the recording space

could be described as a liminal space where a mutuality, a commonality, arises during the recording, one that can be hard to create outside of this temporary space. How can it be done according to Kemp’s description? “She sacrifices her ownership of it so that it becomes open to them both, though the freedom to sacrifice conditionality, thereby subordinating itself the judgment of the other.” How can this be done without erasing the gap that exists between them?

I descend into the subway, I'm barely down the stairs to the platform when I hear noise, look up and see four men ranting and gesticulating – the words ricochet between the walls, are distorted before they reach me. The scene is unintelligible – linguistically. Signs need to be pieced together,³⁰⁾ sounds need to become a melody, gestures need to be filled with meaning. But I am tired and the train arrives, I get on it and go home.

Creation implies that something is coming into being (as opposed to something being done). In the choir training the participants recalled their feelings from incidents on the streets and were trained in voicing these, through a certain choral technique. They created sounds with their own voice in front of the others, and these likely came into being such as they were because the other was there and was also creating sound. That which first seemed like an impediment – that the song was wordless – also became liberating. Peter Kemp again: “That is exactly why the ethical subjectivity does not express itself in what is said, in that which is already known. It expresses itself in ‘an utterance that – in relation to that which is – constitutes an exception.’”³¹⁾

4.









The symmetry makes visible the gap between the choruses and the asymmetry links them: the symmetrical and the asymmetrical make space for agency.

There is a dialogue between the Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving, or a lack of dialogue between voices, facial expressions and bodies. Here the viewer stands in a liminal space between different EU-citizens, with different conditions but similar needs, with different experiences, and interests but similar feelings, with different clothes but in a similar position, with different educations but similar voice resources.

Chapter 7: Voices Notes

1. 📖 Derrida continues: “As for Lévinas, he defined the relationship to the ethical as a face-to-face with the other and then he eventually had to admit that in the dual relation of the ethical face-to-face with the other, the Third is present too. And the Third is not a person, not a *terstis*, a witness who comes in addition to the two. The Third is always already there in the dual relation, in the face-to-face. Lévinas says that this Third, the coming of this Third that has always already come to pass, is the origin or rather the birth of the question. It is with the Third that the call to justice appears as a question. The Third is the one who questions me in the face-to-face, who suddenly makes me feel that there’s a risk of injustice in the ethical if I do not take into account the other of the other.” Jacques Derrida, “A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event”, transl. Gila Walker, *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 33, No. 2, (Winter 2007): 444.
2. 📖 This text belongs to the film *On the Production of The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving*. The purpose is to give an account of the shoot June 13–15, 2014 at Artisten in Gothenburg. The production film is shown in connection with the installation *The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving*.
3. 📖 One example of this are Maja’s and Frej’s comments in the last part of this chapter under the header “Debrief”.
4. 📖 The conversation was recorded and transcribed. Leif Eriksson has read this text and it is published here with his permission.
5. 📖 “Givandets och tiggandets kör”, Tendens kortdokumentärer, Sveriges Radio P1, August 19, 2014. Accessed April 13, 2016, www.sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/417601?programid=3381.
6. 📖 “Ej Tiggare”, Accessed April 13, 2016, www.ejtiggare.se.
7. 📖 This is what I’ve tried to emphasize in the past fifteen years. I changed my focus when I was working in South Africa 1999–2002 – no, South Africa directed my focus at *what we do with each other shapes what we do*. *How do I take a photo* changed to *How do I get a photo*. I sense a brutality, a violence, a sensationalism in the production

- of *What* if *What* isn't also counterbalanced/put in relation to *How*. I maintain that the market likes to look at *What* and that research within the humanities and social sciences as well as a political context can give us this essential *How*. This is why artistic research is important to me.
8. 📖 *The Chorus of Begging*: Laurentiu, Catalin, Gabi, Marian, Marin, Aurel, Nikolai, Florino, Augustina, Ana (the older), Ana (the younger), Margareta, Ileana.
The Chorus of Giving: Jon, Erik, Maja, Samuel, Frej, Gunilla, Kia, Leila, Catharina, Håkan, Jennifer.
Choir directors and sound: Next Stop: Horizon – Jenny Roos and Pär Hagström. Camera B-Chorus: Erik Pauser. Camera G-chorus: Lars Siltberg. Interpreter: Carmen Condruz. Recorded in the Jacobsson Theatre, Artisten, University of Gothenburg. Editing: Kristina Meiton. Sound editing: Pär Hagström. Director and producer: Cecilia Parsberg.
 9. 📖 Catharina says: “We rehearsed and were instructed separately. Now we’re about to enter the room where we meet for the first time. We’ve gone over our instructions several times. Walk silently, single file. Arrange yourselves in the given order. Stand still and meet people’s gazes, meet them, the others. It’s time. We gather outside the still-closed door. In this moment I’m shaken at my core. What is it? The word is dread. I have time to think that I am afraid of encountering disdain and distance. That everything I am and do will be judged. Then the door opens, a nod and we go to take our places. The bright spotlights. The black room. The camera guys. Everything is still. I lift my gaze. The Chorus of Begging has lined up, they are watching us. Hesitating, embarrassed, shy, grinning. We stand there for a long time looking at each other. Then the choral directors begin.”
 10. 📖 Martin Rössel, musician and producer, who has put the song of the choruses on Spotify describes it as: “They aren’t singing straight-forward tones, but atonal clusters. This breaks up the sense of a tonality to a unified sound.” Danish choir director and pianist Torben Eskildsen writes “This reminds me and has me associating to Gerlesborg, where I in the early ’80s participated in a number of vocal improvisations, where we did ‘types of noises’/‘noise collages’ with composer Svend-David Sandström. We used cluster chords, harmonies of closely spaced tones, whose tonal value is determined by among other things the density and location. On keyboard instruments clusters were carried out by striking a specific section of keys with the palm of a hand, forearm or the like.”
 11. 📖 Merete Mazzarella writes: “Phenomenologist Sara Ahmed wants to view emotions as movement – in space, between individuals, groups, and objects – definitely not as something that is, that exists inside people, but rather as something that’s done and becomes actions, in interaction with and dependent on other people.”
Merete Mazzarella, “Emotioner kan väcka heta känslor”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 17, 2011. Accessed April 22, 2016, www.svd.se/kultur/understreckt/emotioner-kan-vacka-heta-kanslor_6559059.svd.
 12. 📖 The essay had been published in *Glänta* No. 1 (2014) the previous week. It can now also be found at the online journal www.eurozine.com (in Swedish as well as in English). *Eurozine* described the text as follows in Eurozine Review: “The informal politics of distribution on the streets – begging, giving – makes visible the faults inherent to the European welfare system, writes [Cecilia Parsberg](#). Free movement is intended to open up national borders, but when poor EU citizens make use of this freedom to travel and do what they can to make money within the framework of the law, they are met by rules and statutes that aim to prevent them from enjoying this possibility.” Cecilia Parsberg, “Giving in Free Movement Europe”, *Eurozine*, August 6, 2014. Accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2014-08-06-parsberg-en.html>.
 13. 📖 Judith Kiros, “Rasismen kommer uppifrån”, *Dagens Nyheter*, August 7, 2014. Accessed March 22, 2016, www.dn.se/kultur-noje/kulturbatt/rasismen-kommer-uppifran.
 14. 📖 Segment on the Swedish TV program *Kulturnyheter*. *Kulturnyheter*, SVT, August 22, 2014. Also available at: <https://vimeo.com/108839080>.
 15. 📖 Translated from Swedish. Svetlana Aleksijevitj, *Kriget har inget kvinnligt ansikte*, transl. Kajsa Öberg Lindsten, audiobook, (Stockholm: Ersatz, 2013), 26:46.
 16. 📖 If conditions allow, as they did at Skövde Konsthall, Reflektera Konsthall in Väven, Umeå, at Varbergs Konsthall, and at Norrbottens Museum. When it was shown in containers there were other criteria. At street-screenings it is shown as a split-screen and the sound is the element that first reaches passers-by, after that they stop and see the projection on the wall, if they want to know more I talk to them.
 17. 📖 Sara Westin, *The Paradoxes of Planning, A Psycho-Analytical Perspective* (Ph.D. thesis at Uppsala University 2014), (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 187.
 18. 📖 For more on this training see [chapter 7.1](#) “On the Production of The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving”.
 19. 📖 See “[Places I](#)” ([chapter 3](#)) and “[Places II](#)” ([chapter 8](#)).
 20. 📖 “Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri”, *Socialmedicinsk tidskrift*, Vol. 92, No. 3, (2015), Camilla Ravnbøl, 328 and 331. Accessed May 6, 2016, <http://socialmedicinsktidskrift.se/index.php/smt/issue/view/105>.
 21. 📖 “Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri”, *Socialmedicinsk tidskrift*, Vol. 92, No. 3, (2015), Mujo Halilovic, 361. Accessed May 6, 2016, <http://socialmedicinsktidskrift.se/index.php/smt/issue/view/105>.
 22. 📖 Judith Butler, “Non-Thinking in the Name of the Normative”, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable*, (New York: Verso, 2009), 150.
 23. 📖 Except for payment, see [chapter 7.1](#) “On the Production of The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving”.

24.  Since the designation *the Roma who beg* and *the begging Roma* are at play in the public discourse and I have personally experienced viewers using these to speak of The Chorus of Begging, I want to further emphasize that the division is not about ethnicity. For instance there are Roma participants in both The Chorus of Begging as well as The Chorus of Giving. (See further discussion in the Introduction, “Designations” as well as [Chapter 5.2](#))
25.  Butler, p. 150
26.  Tobias Hering, November 2014, in response to Cecilia Parsberg’s reflections in a doctoral seminar.
27.  “Ethics for Lévinas is an *an-archy*, i.e. absence of control, rejection of all generalization.” Translated from the Swedish. Peter Kemp, *Lévinas, En introduktion*, transl. Rikard Hedenblad, (Gothenburg: Daidalos, 1992), 67.
28.  Quoted in Kemp, 73.
29.  Ibid., 73.
30.  “The Other is the stranger that disturbs the peace of the home. However The Other is also another Freedom, i.e. a reality that I don’t have any power over and that I can’t control.” Kemp, 40.
31.  Ibid., 49.

Cecilia
Parsberg

Chapter (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** 9)

Places II

8.1. Sleeping Places and Closets

Note

Staged Work { Places II }

Chapter 8: Staged Work (Sleeping Places, a photo series) (Closets, a photo series)

Places II

“Sleeping places in central Stockholm, January 2015” is a series of photographs of some of the many sleeping places that are furnished on the streets. I feel like I am looking straight into bedrooms without walls, ceilings, beds, and closets. It’s a space that should be private.¹⁾

8.1. Sleeping Places and Closets

1.

I have shadowed them, noted time and place and gone up to them and asked for permission to photograph. In exchange for a hundred kronor I'm lying on the street, pressing my bendy gorilla tripod against the wall of a building to get a vertical line and a straight horizon to frame blankets draped over bodies. There is a pair of black shoes in front of the blanket.

When I adjust the focus – moving the red focus cursor as far out to the right as I can – she pops into the image and gives me a big smile. I hear the others giggling around me. What's so funny?

I've asked them for an image. She's giggling at me. What kind of images am I really getting here? She makes me see how I see them, how I'm crawling around on the ground to get this image.





Stockholm, Sveavägen, December 2015.

Chapter 8: Places II
Note

-
1.  About 100 people who had been sleeping on Sergels Torg were evicted on February 11, 2015. The City of Stockholm opened a space where some can spend the night. Individual triage was also performed on site for possible referral to emergency social services. "Tiggare kördes bort från Sergels Torg", Sveriges Radio, February 11, 2015. Accessed April 26, 2016. www.sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6090826.

Cecilia
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Search:

Chapter (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9)

Places III

9.1 A Place in Europe

Notes

Staged Work { }

9.1 A Place in Europe



1.

The place is demarcated by a highway, a large new development and some rocky hills with a grove of trees,¹⁾ above are elevated subway tracks. It is lowered in the midst of the urban landscape, not particularly visible to passers by, the surrounding borders create a triangle where a sort of state of exception seems to be in effect – at least for some of those who live there. It's a place in central Stockholm where a few hundred people live, work, and circulate, they've come from various countries in and outside Europe, some are Swedish citizens. They've come here for different reasons, what they all have in common

is the hope of a more successful life. Some are doing short-term work in accordance with free movement, others are just sleeping here temporarily. It's a place in transition. There are many similar places in Europe, they're becoming increasingly common. But it's also a place we've seen at previous points in Swedish history during large waves of migration. That is why my thesis touches down in a place like this, in this place. It ends by opening up a new inquiry where my questions can be put in play in new ways and a new work can begin to take shape.

2.

There are three five-story buildings here, two of them are empty and sealed up. When I search the city planners office for plans I find that the buildings are slated for demolition, but it doesn't say when.

At the bottom of the slope that leads down to the middle house there are two campers, but there are no people visible nearby. I ask a construction worker passing by if he knows if anyone lives there. We speak English, each with our own accent. Yes, he's seen people come out of them around six o'clock in the morning, he doesn't know where they're from because he's never spoken with them. He tells me there are several other similar encampments around here.

– A few live over there, he points behind him.

– Where are you from? I ask

– From Portugal, I work there, he says and nods down the road to where a biomass power plant is being built. I go where he pointed. On the far

end of the third five-story building there are two steel doors. The left door leads to a temporary shelter in the basement with about thirty beds, operated by the City Mission. I meet a few thirty-something men from Guinea.

– Wow, there are a lot of you living here.

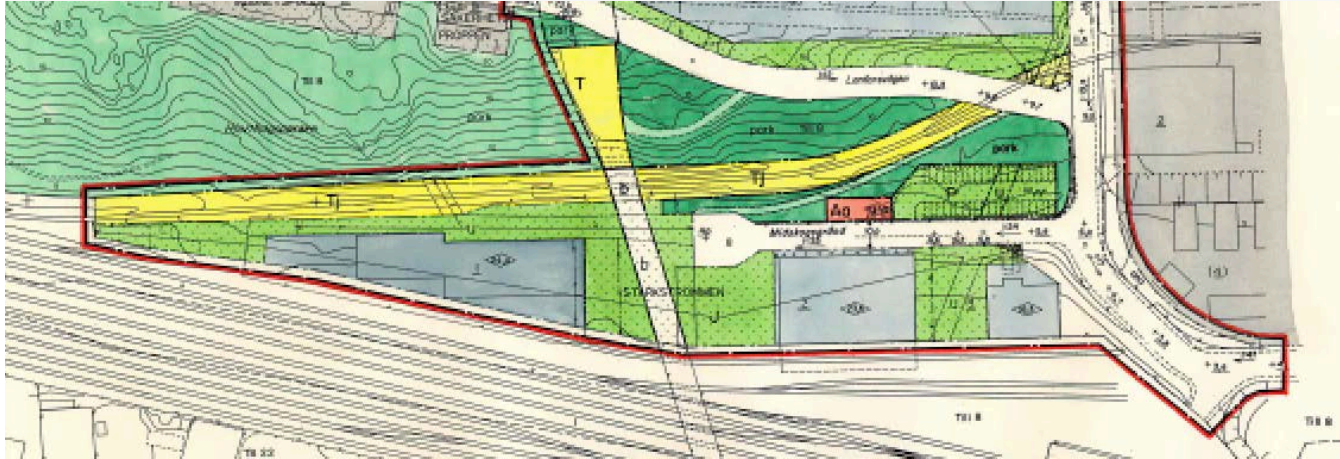
– We go and look for work in the morning then we come back here. They gesture behind them and I see seven men exit a basement door to go smoke. One sits down, there's only one chair. Several of them have come here through free movement, others are from countries outside of Europe.

– The two of us have residency permits in Portugal.

– How long have you been here?

– Two months.

They're happy to talk to me but don't want me to photograph them, say where they live, or give their names.







The steel door to the right goes to Convictus shelter for the homeless. Nina, who is the director at Convictus Bryggan tells me that during the coldest half of the year they only accept women at night and men in the daytime. Most of the women are from Romania and Bulgaria and have come here to beg. The men spend their evenings and nights recycling cans or doing various kinds of day labor. Just ten years ago middle-aged Swedish men with addiction issues were the biggest group at the shelter, today most are “third country nationals,” usually from North and West Africa.²⁾ A similar number are from Eastern Europe, mainly Romania.³⁾ Those who stay here have “fallen through the cracks” between the structural exclusion and inclusion mechanisms of the system.





Every morning at half past six the doors open and a long trail of humans wander off with their belongings in blue Ikea bags. They're going to the city to seek work, beg, and perhaps look for a different place to sleep, there is a lot of pressure on the shelters. At the same time about a hundred construction workers arrive at another entrance to the same building. They soon emerge again, wearing bright green and yellow vests, orange or red helmets. Those who haven't gotten work stand around smoking, waiting their turn.



On the way back I see a van, the side door has been taken off it and is leaned up against it. After ascertaining that nobody's there I raise my camera above the door and shoot. I look at the image; people are sleeping here too.⁴⁾ I ask a worker locking up the car next to me if he knows anything, but no, he has no idea what country the owners of the car are from, he says in a neutral tone. He's from Poland.



3.

In and around the middle one of the three shuttered buildings, the one I call the House, there's artistic activity – a self-organized cluster of artists have intervened in the environment with their art.

A new overpass has been built behind the buildings, far too close. There's a loading dock along the back of the House. With the arrival of the overpass there's no longer enough space to drive vehicles up to it for loading. But the overpass provides shelter to some. Next to the concrete wall they've made themselves sleeping places out of wooden pallets. They make their beds there every night.







The location is secluded and they can sleep there relatively unbothered, a few security guards on patrol are the only people with a view

of their open bedroom, and the guards appear to accept their presence. I've seen many similarly furnished, organized sleeping places in central Stockholm. There are about ten sections under the loading dock and I can glimpse rolled-up mattresses, clothes, and blankets under most of them. In one of these encampments several shoes are lined up. In the five-story building next to the loading dock there are about thirty rooms on each floor. In here, as well as outside, artists AKAY and KPE (KlisterPeter) [Glue Peter] and others have created a series

of pieces. If they'd wanted and tried to get in, the homeless people might have found the ladder that the artists had hidden and seen that the window on the second floor can be opened. But they don't seem to think along those lines. The begging people I've previously spoken with say that they don't want to bother anyone, they want to live an orderly life, they don't want to break rules and ordinances they want a home and a job. And the same is probably true of most of those who come here looking for work. They don't want to be out there, but they don't want to be in there either.

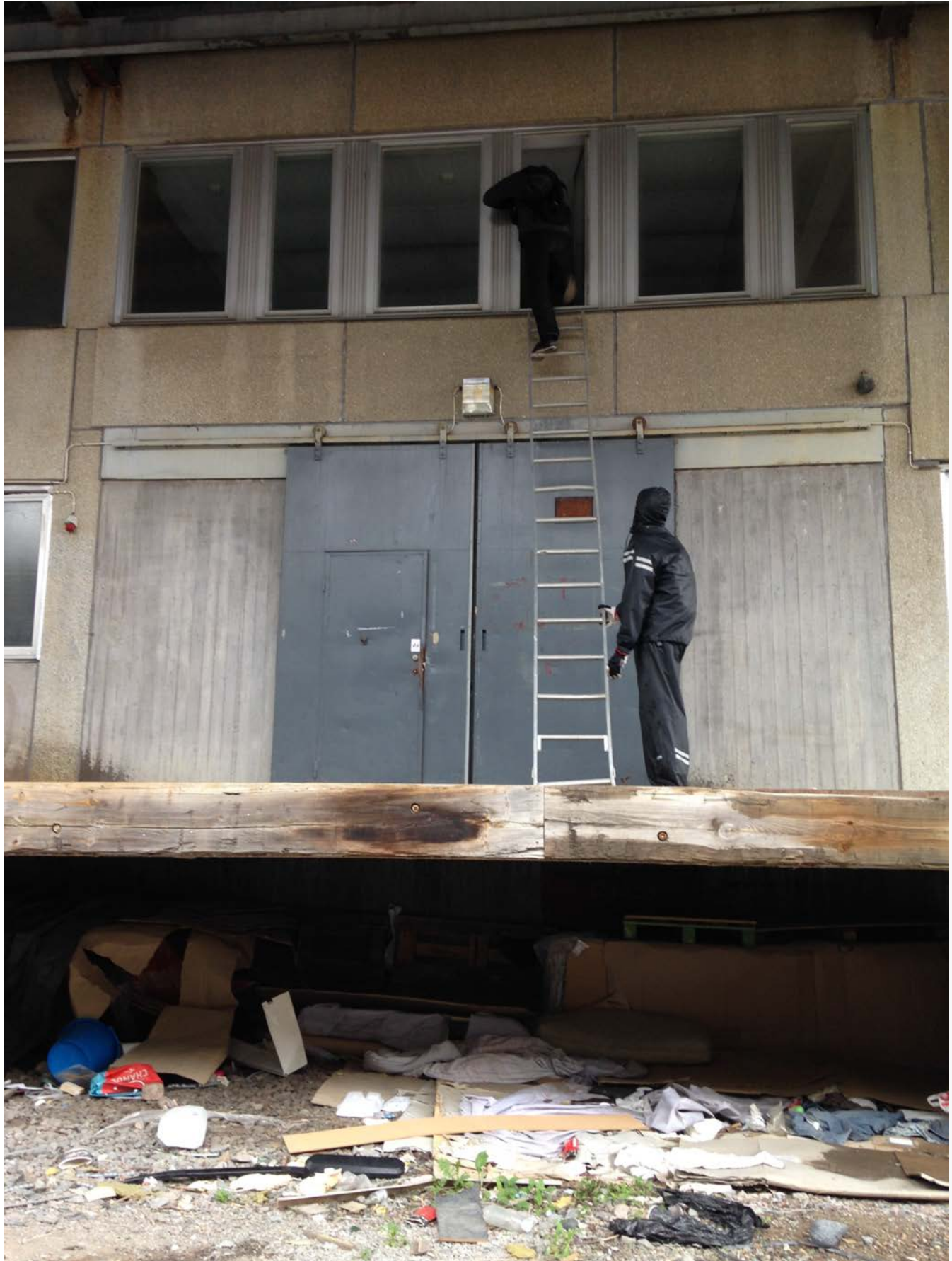


"Because it never ends"



Outside the buildings a kind of bare life is underway⁵⁾ and inside one of the buildings as well as outside there's a kind of artistic activity. The transformation of the space is giving rise to both these activities. Urban spaces – that aren't included in urban planning, and are still constituted in the city by people, such as the places, sleeping places, closets of begging – are not a representation of something, they are a political form in and of themselves. What forces are at work in this liminal space?

4.





I follow the artists into the House, there's an alarm system on the first floor so we enter on the second floor using a ladder.⁶⁾

Paintings are often objects, but not here.⁷⁾ Inside the former offices in the House paintings cover entire walls, they dissolve the wall visually as it

becomes the painting and the painting becomes the wall. Words have been painted here, mostly with the tag KPE (KlisterPeter) and the signatures of other artists, but also sentences, comments.

It brings to mind how graffiti artists from all over the world have painted the Israeli wall since it began to be built in 2003. How people have swarmed to the wall since it was built and left a multitude of messages, symbols, images behind.⁸⁾ As if to dissolve what is grey and compact and open up what blocks vision and movement of bodies.⁹⁾

I paint signs to show that, "I was here," my sign is my testimony. Being on the side of the demarcated means something to me. When you read these signs they get imbued with meaning. The sign connects us. To see images is an act.







5.











How is this art connected to the (transmission of) meaning and content?¹⁰⁾ For whom, for what, is this art made? When the two artists, AKAY and KlisterPeter, talk about their art they claim to give without expecting anything in return. It seems to me that their idea of what art is unites them; with friendship, trust, they make art alone and together with other artists that come there. But what do they mean by giving? To whom or what do they give? Can one give if there's no one there to receive? What kind of giving is this?

Architect and artist Gordon Matta-Clark is central to their practice, as is his “anarchitecture”, “recycling pieces and spaces”, and “building cuts”. Gordon Matta-Clark’s art has been shown and can be discussed since he documented it on photo and film, so too the site-specific performances. Architecture and its compatibility with the urban life of the space was a central concern. Matta-Clark explains that he spent months in Guatemala, and that after he got back he wandered about New York City to find a space to stage *The Making of Pier 52*.¹¹⁾ He did not apply for a permit for this, or many of his other works, but he wasn’t interested in himself – when he created the works – or the viewer feeling uncomfortable. It wasn’t the forbidden, the transgression, or the crime that he was after, even though his works often included those things, Matta-Clark says in an interview that the work doesn’t need that, if anything it’s a burden. What he wanted to show couldn’t be done in another place or in a different way. “Well sneaking in may be attractive to some people, but I’m not interested in that. That’s maybe a flaw, as far as I’m concerned. Because I think

the space and the situation is perfectly valid on it’s own.” The interviewer, Liza Bear asks: “Presumably you spent a fair amount of time working on it, I imagine...”¹²⁾ GM-C: “Oh, well that aspect is something else. LB: Considerable expense. GM-C: Well, I mean, whether or not the piece will have a public life of any kind. Of course at the moment, it remains a confiscated work.”¹³⁾

Gordon Matta-Clark’s practice introduced new and radical forms of art. Some of his most famous projects involved laboriously cutting holes in the floors of abandoned buildings: “Well, originally it had to do with cutting out slices or wedges of [...] the imperial New York waterfront.”¹⁴⁾ Or in the case of *Splitting* (1974); dividing a suburban home in two. “Dealing with nothing more complex than the limits of human scale.” Rooms, houses, or a space where a particular human activity has taken place at a certain point in history, are opened and restructured for new activity for the future. For AKAY and KlisterPeter the choice of building is less about architecture. They’re wanderers in the city, they find a place where they practice for a while. Is it a studio? No, because this art can’t be

moved to an exhibition space. Is it an exhibition space? No, viewers don't come here. This building has an alarm on the first two floors; AKAY and KlisterPeter might not get in tomorrow.

When structures change voids – anomies – can emerge, fictions are created in anomies.



Art mediates meaning, which meaning are we talking about? The words DAMAGE, BEAUTY, and BRICK are carved out in different ways and in different materials. This isn't about embodying sculptures, this is the opposite – the artists have cut out the word BEAUTY in a sliding wall, it's a sliding wall, the word unfolds as one pulls the wall out. Why did they choose that word? Beauty is an aesthetic term. In an interview Louise Bourgeois says: "Beauty? It seems to me that beauty is an example of what the philosophers call reification, to regard an abstraction as a thing. Beauty is a series of experiences. It is not a noun. People have experiences. If they feel an intense aesthetic pleasure they take that experience and project it into the object. They experience the idea of beauty, but beauty in and of itself does not exist. [...] In fact, beauty is not only a mystified

expression of our own emotion."¹⁵⁾ The word BEAUTY is cut out of the viewer's projection surface – the viewers in this case are the artists themselves – they create and are also spectators within their community, and they tell me other artists come here, they're part of a cluster, it's a self-organized activity – the hollow word is folded up with the sliding door and can unfurled. They de-objectify the idea with a void and leave it open. Beauty is left open, to be filled with meaning.¹⁶⁾ BRICK, BEAUTY, and DAMAGE – the words have been cut out of the walls and become openings in the structure of the building. They open the question – who and what is to fill these open terms, in this *place waiting for transformation*, with meaning?





Between that which will be done and that which is done, between future and present tense, there's a transformation process – a process that demands

time and space for itself. It can feel like free fall, or like a condition of the possibility of possibilities, but strangely it is also a lack of freedom; because not-knowing is a condition in which one becomes dependent on what one is going to learn from (by, with). The mental process is dependent on the response of the matter.

I walk through my thesis, chapter after chapter, room after room, hallway after hallway. Ceilings and walls are caving in inside the building. Because something must be visualized using other means – an economy of giving that doesn't merely measure and belongs to the territorial. One wall reads: "Because it never ends".

6.

In one of the rooms in the House the window shades have been attached to each other so that they can be raised and drawn at the same time. Window shades are part of this building they're in every room, over the years many hands have raised and lowered them daily – with a certain force and at a certain pace. I pull the ring and need to use my entire body for leverage to pull up eighteen shades at once. They rattle. I'm almost blinded by the light that I let in before I let go of the ring and the shades fall down with a loud bang.



The importance of the collective eye – its limiting community. (When I slip and fall on the street and quickly brush my pants off and pretend as if nothing happened – who is assumed to be watching? Why do I think anyone sees me on the street? I am seen by the public eye, but don't I also dress myself in this gaze, these gazes?) Let us call those who see – with all their senses, all their body – one.

Like Gordon Matta-Clark, AKAY and KlisterPeter help us to divide the sensual, both in the sense of splitting and sharing.

7.

Their art can't be moved or sold, it can't be part of economic transactions. The artists give their time, their energy, their desire, without demands for reciprocation. Neither their work inside the House or the spray-painted images and messages outside it can "participate in the circulation of representations of representations."¹⁷⁾ So why is this (art) interesting? The method is performative.¹⁸⁾ "Performance resists the balanced calculations of finance. It saves nothing, it only spends,"¹⁹⁾ writes Peggy Phelan. But this isn't a wasteful resistance, not consumption with the ulterior motive of accumulation, but a lusty transgression.²⁰⁾ Another thing that makes this art interesting is that the artists don't work alone, other artists are active here, nor do they work as a group. "Individual genius is not the origin of culture," as Rasmus Fleischer and Samira Ariadad write in their essay "Att göra gemensamma rum" [Creating common spaces].²¹⁾ They describe a system that has embraced the liberal idea that the private and the public are opposites, and that income for sustenance is won and communities found through a dialectical struggle. But what's in between, in the act of giving without getting anything in return; these artists are well aware that they won't make a livelihood off their work. The art will be torn down with the House. Could they be investigating if art can hold this kind of giving? Perhaps it's exactly this kind of giving that makes art interesting and important, a certain kind of art, at any rate. And here, in this kind of place, there is the possibility of developing the kind of giving that isn't about creating artifacts that are a part of the economy of reproduction.²²⁾ The artists found this place and began. What they get in return is something beyond that – space, meaning, content, freedom? It's not limitless giving. "As described by anthropologist Marcel Mauss in his classic work *The Gift* transactions of gifts – and counter gifts [...] contribute to social cohesion."²³⁾ When this is put into practice self-organized communities can be created. They have no political agenda but the political

is constantly present – they work according to a system of their own, create a social script of their own and make their art. Perhaps this is the meaning they want to pour into the empty word BEAUTY – in itself an inexhaustible term. The collective practices of the House create a certain kind of artistic expression. There is a sort of "undetermined openness, when aesthetic experience is connected to freedom," when communities emerge and are formed, according to philosopher Sven-Olof Wallenstein. "On another level, this floating dimension, between ideas and things, subjective and objective, frame and non-frame, depends on desire not being private or internal, but coming directly from our ability to communicate, from that which opens on intersubjective community – because this, Kant says in the important §9, is 'the key to the critique of taste,'"²⁴⁾ according to Wallenstein. Desire is also associated with a temptation beyond the moral, beyond the known, with an attraction to the foreign, and to the non-doable. If the limit is transgressed the sublime can be reached, transgression is part of the method. It's not just walls, surveillance, it is also the beautiful or the ugly – and images of what's beautiful or ugly – that is transgressed when communication is opened (the spray-painted messages outside and inside, the cut-out words in the walls). Desire is associated with communicability. Not through the usual channels of communication – but through prohibited communication by aerosol can. "The aesthetic economy is always dependent on a border between the internal and the external (the frame as an *on the side of, outer-work, parergon*) that neither belongs to the internal nor the external, and that can be understood as a framing effect that always remains unstable: the frame is always about to crack, at the same time as it can never completely fall away, and de-framing and framing are like two vectors, the interplay of which constitutes the dynamics of the aesthetic field, and where one will always refer to the other,"²⁵⁾ as Sven-Olof Wallenstein puts it.





8.

The question of what kind of place this is remains. The fact that the House and the surrounding area are under surveillance means that the area is a place in some sense. It's not an obvious non-place, since the surveillance makes it a place in some sense. Those I'll speak to half a year later – the cleaning firm that participates in evictions – calls places like this X-places, but the people who work at the

shelters don't like that, the situation here is their existence, their reality. That's also why it isn't a "non-place" in anthropologist Marc Augé's sense where the place is contracted and the person becomes anonymous through the nature of the place.²⁶⁾ This place is also populated by people, the shelters, the encampments; people who use it in various ways, the workers' locker- and break-rooms. Thomas and Samuel have lived under the loading dock for two and a half years. It's something between a place and a non-place. It's a liminal space that could be described as "vague terrain" – a designation for unproductive, undefined places that have been abandoned, often placed between exploited productive places in a city.²⁷⁾ But that's not quite right either, this area isn't abandoned and will be populated, it is populated and activated. It's not a place in transition but *a place that is waiting* – a waiting place – the condition of the place

creates the conditions for art because perhaps this is exactly what makes it attractive for artists to claim. They encroach on such places.²⁸⁾ The artists ponder the House and the place while they create – with their images they reflect upon what's going on here and in that way they also indirectly relate to the migrants and guest workers that populate the place. (And perhaps the condition of the place even dictates the practice of an [unknown] number of artists.) I too encroach on it. But my work emerges in a different way, I have a different method, but I plug into the art of the other artists since it will appear in my images and recordings. I too create activity in this place, which demands that I connect to the people who live and work here, and negotiate which images should be made visible. In this sense the place is a space for negotiation. When different realities meet negotiations arise between different parties that inhabit a place, the homeless, artists, workers, guards, property owners, when abandoned or soon to be demolished houses are used in ways other than those planned or expected. The place as political form poses questions of when and between which logics and parties negotiations will be initiated, how and over what. Which parties will participate? It's a place waiting to be made visible.

9.

I return four months later, on a cold and clear fall day in 2015. I want to speak to the people here. For a while now it's been impossible to get into the House, the artists say that new alarm systems have been installed and that their previous points of entry have been closed. I wander around outside, where the docks used to be there are now two shacks.

Two men walk toward me. We greet and strike up a conversation; they're from Algeria. One of them, who I speak English with, shows me his residency card from Spain, he can live there for twelve years. His family is there and they live in a house, but he lost his job and came here a few weeks ago to try to find a livelihood and now lives in a shack that he's built himself.

– It's not human to live like this, he says and shows me.

– It's getting cold.

– Yes, I'm going to Spain soon, I give up, you can't get work here without a personal identification number and I don't want to do what the Romanians do – they beg, I'd never do that.

The need and necessity is visible and raw.





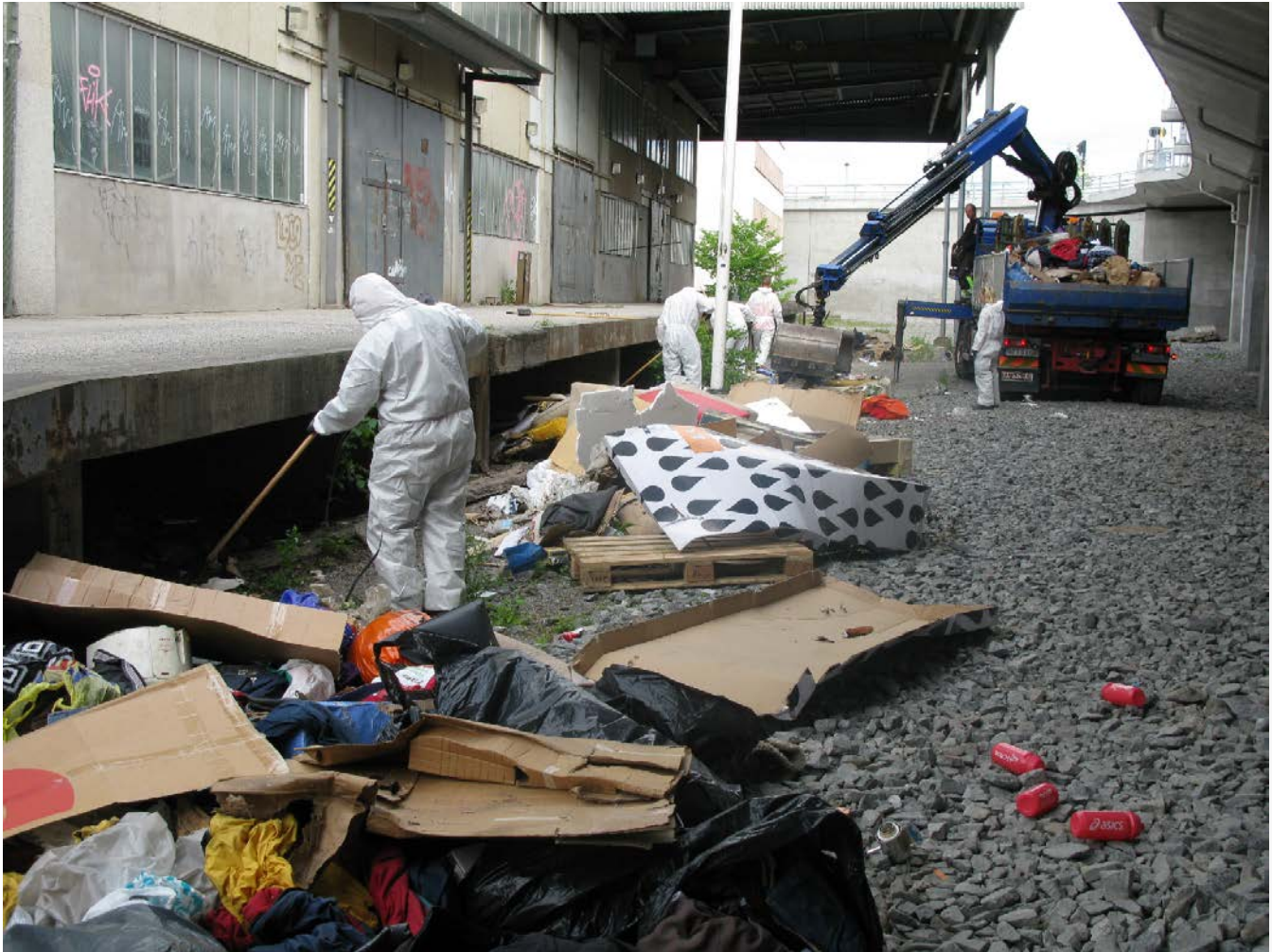


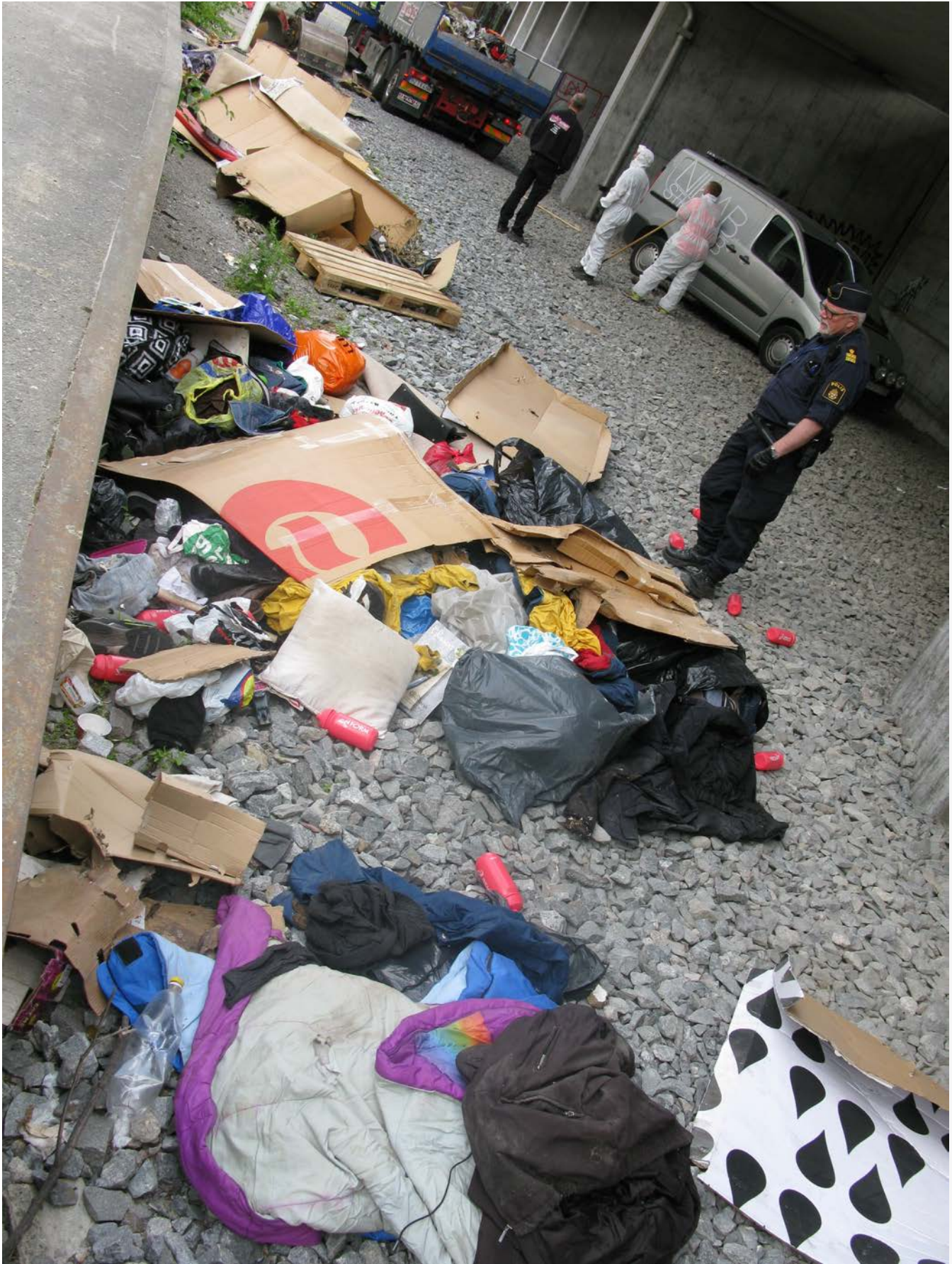


10.

I continue coming here during the spring of 2016 with filmmaker Erik Pauser. I've received a project grant to film the area and I want to develop a choreography with the dancer Anna Westberg. I speak to among others Thomas, 45, who has a residency permit and two jobs but is homeless and living under loading dock of the House. Samuel, 35, does too. He is homeless and undocumented from Ghana/Togo. And Albert, from Nigeria who has a residency permit and a job. Leonas from Lithuania has lost his passport and his cellphone and is living in the yard. Mohamed is from Libya and has had a residency permit for eight years, he can only find temporary work, usually off the books and lives in one of the shacks under the freeway. Said, 38, from Morocco, who's just gotten

his personal identification number and begun taking Swedish classes for immigrants lives in the shack across the way. Nina from Finland, the director at Convictus. Maria, a begging person from Romania who sleeps at the shelter sometimes. We speak with Arne who has had homes and been homeless and now manages daytime activities at Convictus and with Michaela from Romania who works with the women's night operations. We also speak to a few workers from Poland and from Ireland, and one foreman from Sweden. But neither the management company for the House, the cleaning company, nor the owners of the alarm company – all established businesses in Sweden want to talk to us.





clear all encampments on the property, including those under the loading dock behind the House and Leonas' home under the bike shack. But not the other shacks around, because they're on land that belongs to the transportation authorities and the City of Stockholm. Those who tear out and throw away other people's personal effects don't want to be filmed and try to stop me, but since I'm standing on ground owned by the City of Stockholm I can film what's going on. Those who are doing

the cleaning especially don't like me filming, even after I've explained that I'm not focusing on faces, but what they're doing. They react strongly and emotionally. Two policemen are emotional too and want to stop me, while another policeman comes up and asks why and wants to listen. The homeless whose temporary homes are being put in the dumpster want me to film and they tell their stories in front of the camera.²⁹⁾ From these stories and events I want to develop a filmic choreography that builds on my work with different forms of images of the gestures of begging and giving in the urban space.

11.

There's a demolition permit for the House, but the owners don't have a permit to build something new in its place, which I find out after talking to the city planning office. Long before the eviction, around the time I'd first started filming the area, I'd met Anders, owner of the company Destroy that manages the alarm and surveillance for the House. We chatted and I got to follow him into the House. He showed me *BRICK* and said with admiration in his voice: "They cut this out using a hand saw."³⁰⁾

The House is a structure where lives are lived and arranged. Or is it life – living – that limits activities and gives rise to the House? Lives that have been separated – by an imagined structure – can also be connected – by a lived structure – but not without hope of something else.

This is how Hannah Arendt describes the phenomenon of houses: "It implies 'housing somebody' and being 'dwelt in' as no tent could house or serve as a dwelling place which is put up today and taken down tomorrow. The word *house*, Solon's 'unseen measure,' 'holds the limit of all things' pertaining to dwelling; it is a word that could not exist unless one presupposes thinking about being housed, dwelling, having a home. As a word *house* is a shorthand for all these things."³¹⁾ Hannah Arendt writes of thinking that a meaning can be reclaimed by contemplating a word: "*The word house is something like a frozen thought that thinking must unfreeze*, defrost as it were, whenever it wants to find its original meaning."³²⁾ And this house stands as an empty structure, a *place waiting for transformation*. A frozen thought in the middle of Stockholm. In some ways disconnected from, but still linked to, the prevailing social structure.

In this *place waiting for transformation*, there are hopes.³³⁾ In those who come to seek work in Sweden and try to get residency permits and personal identification numbers, in the homeless who build themselves temporary shacks, in those who come to beg, in those who come to work at Sweden's largest biomass power plant, in those who work for the aid organizations – civil society's organized support for the homeless and others who "fall through the cracks", in the older couple in one of the campers whose son got a job in Stockholm, in the construction company that has gotten a demolition permit for the buildings, but no permit for a new building, in the artists to continue creating, in the person who with a repetitive motion reaches out a hand waiting for a response and hopes that this response will mark the start of a negotiation.



12.



The short introductory story about my non-encounter with a begging person on the street contains everything that this dissertation is about and has developed. I've wanted to show how the situation on the street is a multi-dimensional experience, what layers the interaction between the begging person and me might contain. By beginning with that story I've wanted to show how a seemingly commonplace action and reaction to another person can be revealed aesthetically with an ethical argument. And vice versa. I devote myself to interactions, gaps: the ethics of place, the sphere between one and another. To me respect is a question of how we should handle this atmosphere where there also must be room for the third.

The first part of the dissertation was about investigating and revealing the images that are put into play between begging and giving in the urban landscape. Embodied hegemonic images both separate and connect bodies. That's why the next step was to try to decode social *scripts* together with givers and stage new movements. That led to *The Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving* which doesn't strive to replicate a social situation, but replaced it with a choreography that reveals a negation – the arrangement of the choruses demonstrates another order that demands other actions with one another, in terms of language, movement, and attitude, and training was needed – it was a *social choreography* in cultural theorist Andrew Hewitt's sense of the term: "I use the term social

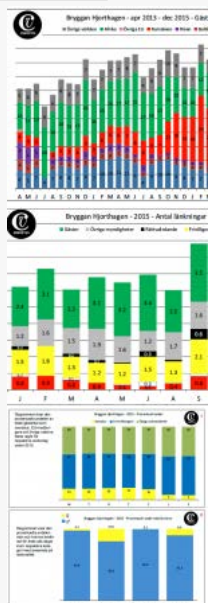
choreography to denote a tradition of thinking about social order that derives its ideal from the aesthetic realm and seeks to instill that order directly at the level of the body.”³⁴⁾ When the installation is shown it doesn’t just make visible the interaction of the two choruses, but also the space between them. The arrangement of the two choirs is a choreographed “co-presence” – that denotes a space for social interaction – and in the installation it becomes a space that necessitates the viewer.³⁵⁾ They stood across from each other – five meters apart – when they were filmed and the footage is projected the same way in the installation. A space for negotiation is being revealed and a space for action where the viewer is included in the negotiated dialogue

on film. The meeting space that was established when they trained and sang together became a political form. As Andrew Hewitt describes: “Choreography is not just another of the things we ‘do’ to bodies, but a reflection on – and enactment of – how bodies ‘do’ things, and on the work that the work of art performs. Social Choreography exists not parallel to the operation of social norms and structures, nor is it entirely subject to those structures. It serves – ‘catachritically’, we might say – to bring them into being.”³⁶⁾ The purpose of *The Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving* is to generate new images and movements, both in the participants and in viewers of the installation and thus also impact social life. I’ve also tried other ways of showing the work, such as screenings on streets or in parks. As a work *The Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving* can’t be separated from how it was made, together with the production film it constitutes a blueprint for how a space of action can be created between the begging and the giving.³⁷⁾ That is what my thesis – with my methodological intent – can be said to have led to. If we are to be able to discuss the ethical – which is necessitated by the political – the process needs to be made visible as well as the result, that is to say the method that is developed in the thesis. “Actions – not just representations – are ideological,” Andrew Hewitt writes. By social choreography Hewitt means that ideology becomes visible, becomes embodied, in the shifts between discourse and action as ideology.³⁸⁾ I didn’t make the production film as a documentary to attempt to explain the process – that would only reduce the power of the “work of art,” but as a document the purpose of which isn’t to create an exclusive work, but an inclusive one – though one that can’t be part of circular reproduction. Within artistic research such a practice can be developed, methods can be developed, another form of art be produced. While scientific research is dependent on the result, artistic research can counteract by emphasizing the thesis as the act of receiving the relay baton, continuing the process and accounting for the handover.

Chapter 9: Places III Notes

1.  A new biomass power plant is being built. Fortum is investing five billion kronor, which is the largest industrial investment in Sweden, it will be fueled using byproducts from the logging industry. “Tillsammans skapar vi en grönare stad”. Accessed July 26, 2016, www.fortum.com/countries/se/kampanjer/biobransle-vartan/pages/default.aspx.
2.  One of them is Thomas from Ghana, he is a former soldier, who moved to Italy and got work and a residency permit but when the situation became too difficult he came to Sweden where he now has a residency permit. He’s been living outside, under the loading dock behind the House for two and a half years. Thomas distributes advertising between two a.m. and nine a.m. then goes to Convictus, eats, takes a shower, sometimes he does laundry there. He is one of those who wants to tell his story for the camera and comes up to us when he’s seen that we’ve been back every week or so for the past three months, to film the area and try to talk to people.

3. 📖 “Convictus Bryggan Hjorthagen”. Accessed July 26, 2016,
www.convictus.org/hemloshet/bryggan_ostermalm.html.



4. 📖 I don't think it's okay to photograph other people's bedrooms without their permission, but in this situation my assessment is that it's more important to show how people live here. The photograph is an example of one of the ethics-aesthetics negotiations that constantly arise – decisions that must be made quickly and on site. When I include these two photos with my shadow I also want to show a transgression of a limit in which I am putting the viewer's trust in my images and for this dissertation at risk. At times I misjudge, I encourage reflection on the part of the reader and viewer. The discussion about the ethical must be kept open.
5. 📖 “But in every judicial order there is an exception from order that in a kind of paradox regulates what applies when no order applies, in the state of exception. There the sovereign becomes precisely a sovereign again – and accordingly the citizen is reduced to a bare life. Agamben's thesis is that this is ‘ultimate foundation of political power’ and thus the political essence that precedes every social contract.” So writes Ola Sigurdson, professor of religious studies and systemic theology at the University of Gothenburg, in an article about philosopher Giorgio Agamben's book *Homo Sacer*. Ola Sigurdson, “Agamben visar hur kulturen inkräktar på livet”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 23, 2010. Accessed July 26, 2016, <http://www.svd.se/agamben-visar-hur-politiken-inkrakter-pa-livet/om/kultur:under-strecket>.
6. 📖 AKAY and KlisterPeter gave me permission to use these documentations in my dissertation. I used my phone to photograph when I was in the House. The artists had been hired by Konstnärliga Forskarskolan, Lund University to hold a three-day seminar. Two of us Ph.D. students attended.
7. 📖 Painting is one of the two-dimensional forms of production. Even if painting were to depict a three-dimensional form – visually an object – being and depicting isn't the same (as discussed in [chapter 2](#)), in this way the depicted object is de-objectified. But here we are talking about the actual painting as an object that can be moved.
8. 📖 “Grafitti” originally comes from the Greek “grapho” meaning to write, and is the plural of “inscription” in Italian.
9. 📖 In the news segment about the paintings on the Israeli wall, Banksy's among others, I say: “Those who paint appear to want to open the wall, dissolve the concrete with their images and texts.” The segment was made for the Swedish TV program KOBRA, SVT, 2006. It can also be found here: <https://vimeo.com/95277443>.
10. 📖 Art critic Fredrik Svensk expresses the importance of constantly trying to understand in the face of what images art is made and can be made: “Because aren't mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion that take place mainly on a sensual basis far more important to understand today than those that happen through a conventional politics of selection and representation?” A review of the Nordic pavilion in Venice 2015. Frederik Svensk, “Paviljongen som exklusiv symfoniorkester”, *Kunstkritikk*, May 14, 2015. Accessed July 26, 2016, www.kunstkritikk.se/kritikk/paviljongen-som-exklusiv-symfoniorkester/?d=se.
11. 📖 “And so, after coming back from places where architecture and architecture disintegration is in an incredible state of colossus in Guatemala, I was just determined to start something.” Gordon Matta-Clark; Gloria Moure, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Works and Collected Writings*, (Barcelona: Polígrafa; New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2006), 180.
- 12, 13. 📖 Ibid., 180.
14. 📖 Ibid., 178.
- 15.

- 👉 Louise, Bourgeois, *Deconstruction of the Father; Reconstruction of the Father*, (London: Violette Editions, 1998), 358.
16. 👉 For me it's a clear idea and act. Since my work in South Africa and Palestine/Israel I've expressed beauty as that which opens. For instance I say about the film *A Heart From Jenin* that the gift of the heart opens the wall and when it's received by the family in Israel this opening is actually a hole in the language – and the images – that uphold the wall. As an Israeli friend put it: the wall was in the language before it was built.
17. 👉 I've borrowed this expression from Peggy Phelan. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. (New York: Routledge, 1993). See also [chapter 1.2](#), "Notes on the Text", about performance.
18. 👉 "Thus while performance can be understood as a deliberate 'act' such as in theatre production, performance art or painting by a subject or subjects, performativity must be understood as the iterative and citational practice that brings into being that what it names." writes Barbara Bolt, on page 134, referring to Judith Butler. "Butler is very clear that performativity involves repetition rather than singularity. Performativity is 'not a singular act for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norm, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition.'" Barbara Bolt, "Artistic Research: A performative paradigm?" *PARSE*, No. 3 (2016). Accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.parsejournal.com/article/artistic-research-a-performative-paradigm/>.
19. 👉 Phelan, 148.
20. 👉 Michael Richardson writes, in his interpretation of philosopher George Bataille:
"If we stick to facts capitalism doesn't escape the dialectical logic of Bataille: It consumes, and consumes just as meaninglessly, just as wastefully as any other society. What capitalism is lacking isn't the consumption but every kind of lusty transgression. When we waste we do it grudgingly, all the time and with an ulterior motive of ultimately accumulating." Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 79.
21. 👉 "Individual genius is not the origin of culture, as the tenacious myth of the originator without communities would have it. These communities too need to happen, especially in the gray areas, like rehearsal spaces. According to a liberal view on culture, 'culture' is something free floating – culture doesn't need to happen and it doesn't need community."
Samira Ariadad and Rasmus Fleischer, "Att göra gemensamma rum", *Brand*, No. 1 (2010), 44–6. Accessed July 7, 2016, www.samhallsentreprenor.glokala.se/wp-content/uploads/Att_gora_gemensamma_rum.pdf.
22. 👉 Banksy is another artist who activates urban spaces, who visually questions demarcations through his art, but also as reproduction and transaction. Sales of his paintings in Gaza and on the Israeli wall have been attempted on the art market. "Now I think that even if [Banksy] drew something very small – even a dot – people might cut down their walls and try to sell it." Says Ayed Arafah from the Dheisha refugee camp in Bethlehem. Yolande Knell, "Gaza Family 'Tricked' into Selling Banksy Painting for \$175", BBC News, April 1, 2015. Accessed July 26, 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32139657.
23. 👉 Full quote: "As the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss argues in his classical work *The Gift* from 1925, transactions of gifts and gifts in return – in welfare state terms, the taxation of work in exchange for risk spreading and social protection – contribute to social cohesion." Hanna Bäckström, Johan Örestig, Erik Persson, "The EU Migrant Debate as Ideology", *Eurozine*, June 15, 2016, 2. Accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2016-06-15-orestig-en.html>.
24. 👉 Sven-Olof Wallenstein, "Kant, det sköna och det sublīma", *Paletten*, No. 4 (2015): 59.
25. 👉 *Ibid.*, 59.
26. 👉 Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Anthropology of Supermodernity*, (New York: Verso, 1995), 101. Accessed July 26, 2016, www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~jread2/Auge%20Non%20places.pdf.
27. 👉 Ignasi de Solà-Morales, Catalan architect, historian and philosopher, coined the term *terrain vague*, applied to abandoned, obsolete and unproductive areas, with no clear definitions and limits.
"Ignasi de Solà-Morales", Wikipedia. Accessed July 26, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignasi_de_Solà-Morales.
"With the coining of the term **Terrain Vague**, Ignasi de Solà-Morales is interested in the form of absence in the contemporary metropolis. This interest focuses on abandoned areas, on obsolete and unproductive spaces and buildings, often undefined and without specific limits, places to which he applies the French term *terrain vague*. Regarding the generalized tendency to 'reincorporate' these places to the productive logic of the city by transforming them into reconstructed spaces, Solà-Morales insists on the value of their state of ruin and lack of productivity. Only in this way can these strange urban spaces manifest themselves as spaces of freedom that are an alternative to the lucrative reality prevailing in the late capitalist city. They represent an anonymous reality." "Terrain Vague", Atributos Urbanos. Accessed July 26, 2016, <http://atributosurbanos.es/en/terms/terrain-vague>.
28. 👉 "A gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits: urban encroachment of habitat." "Encroachment", Oxford Dictionaries. Accessed July 26, 2016, www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/encroachment.
29. 👉 A synopsis of the project "A Place in Europe" can be found at www.ceciliaparsberg.com.

30. 🗨️ I haven't been able to get in since. The owners of the House won't give permission despite my referring to research at the university. In one of my conversations with them to try to convince them to let me in so that I can film the project manager suddenly blurts out: "For the love of god I hope you're not making a film about the bums on the site?" I regard this comment as interesting in this context and will leave it here for the reader to interpret.
31. 🗨️ Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture", *Social Research*, Vol. 38, No. 3, (Autumn 1971), 430–1. Accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40970929>.
32. 🗨️ The sentence continues "In medieval philosophy this kind of thinking was called meditation, and the word should be heard as different from, even opposed to, contemplation."
Ibid., 431.
33. 🗨️ Every year the Stockholm region grows by 35,000 inhabitants. The number comes from information about Vårta and Hjorthagen where this place-non-place is located. "Vi bygger om Värtahamnen". Accessed July 26, 2016, www.stockholmshamnar.se/stockholm/vi-bygger-om-vartahamnen.
34. 🗨️ Andrew Hewitt, "Choreography as a Way of Thinking about the Relationship of Aesthetics to Politics", Documenta magazine project (2007). Accessed May 24, 2016, www.old.tkh-generator.net/en/openedsources/andrew-hewitt-choreography-a-way-thinking-about-relationship-aesthetics-politics-0. In the interview he talks about his book. Andrew Hewitt, *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
35. 🗨️ Here choreography is about how bodies dispose of their performativity spatially.
36. 🗨️ Andrew Hewitt who isn't a practitioner himself, he is Professor of Germanic Languages and Comparative Literature, stresses: "In a sense, my training in literary studies puts me at something of a disadvantage in talking about my 'relation to performance studies' because that relation, I think, might be better explicated from the other side of the dialogue, from the perspective of performance itself. It is certainly not my aim to offer prescriptions to performers, but to raise possibilities – perhaps in the realm of theory only – that they themselves might then articulate." Hewitt, "Choreography as a Way of Thinking about the Relationship of Aesthetics to Politics".
37. 🗨️ The aesthetic as independent of the ethic, according to previous reasoning about image, see [chapter 2](#) in particular. See also [chapter 1.2](#) "Notes on the Text", the passage on *art activism*.
38. 🗨️ Hewitt, *Social Choreography*, 11.

Literature and articles

1. The six staged works that are part of the thesis
2. Solo exhibitions with the six staged works
3. Group exhibitions, screenings, street screenings of individual staged works
4. Published articles relevant to the thesis project
5. Participation in Swedish media during the work on the thesis
6. Archive
7. Reference literature, film and open access

1. The six staged works that are part of the thesis

BORDER, 2:10 min, animation, 2011.

What Images Does the Giving Face? & What Images Does the Begging Face? Film installation for a room, filmed 2011–2012, translated by Ioana Cojocariu and Maria Draghici, edited by Kristina Meiton.

Places I, photo series, 2011–2016.

Places II, photo series, 2014–2015.

Body on Street, an ongoing photo demonstration begun in 2014. In July 2016 it consisted of 58 photographs.

The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving, Film installation for a room, the version shown in the thesis is the one projected at street screenings, 2014.

On the Production of The Chorus of Begging and the Chorus of Giving, film about the production that is shown separately, in connection with the film installation, 2014.

Where no other image credit is given the photos in the text are my own. Documentation of exhibitions can be found at:
www.ceciliaparsberg.com.

2. Solo exhibitions with the six staged works

Skellefteå Konsthall, October, 2016–January 2017.
Varbergs Konsthall, September–January, 2015.
Väven, Reflektera Konsthall, Umeå, April–May, 2015.
Skövde Konsthall, March–June, 2015.

3. Group exhibitions, screenings, street screenings of individual staged works

What Images does the Giving face? & What Images does the Begging face?, Shiryaevo biennial, Samara, Russia, 2016.
What Images does the Giving face? & What Images does the Begging face?, Värnamo Kulturhus, September–October, 2015.
The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving, street screening, Värnamo, 2015.
The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving, street screening, Clandestino festival, Gothenburg, 2015.
The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving, on Spotify, 2015.
The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving, street screening, Slussen, Stockholm, 2014.
The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving presented as an audio performance in “Sunday Run-Up” at CCAP; Caprioli studios, 2014.
The Chorus of Begging and The Chorus of Giving, “Motbilder”, curated by ICIA, Göteborg, 2014.
Body on Street, Re(s)on Art, Stockholm, 2014.
Body on Street, Tacit or Loud, Malmö, 2014.
Body on Street, Sveriges Konstföreningar, Umeå, 2014.
Body on Street, GIFF – Gothenburg Filmfestival, 2014.
How do you become a successful beggar in Sweden?, exhibition of thesis project in progress, 50 percent doctoral seminar, World Culture Museum, Gothenburg, 2014.

4. Published articles relevant to the thesis project

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Parsberg, Cecilia, “Giving in free movement Europe”, transl. Sarah Clyne Sundberg, Eurozine.com, August 6, 2014. Accessed July 26, 2016, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2014-08-06-parsberg-en.html>.
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5. Participation in Swedish media during the work on the thesis

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6. Archive

En

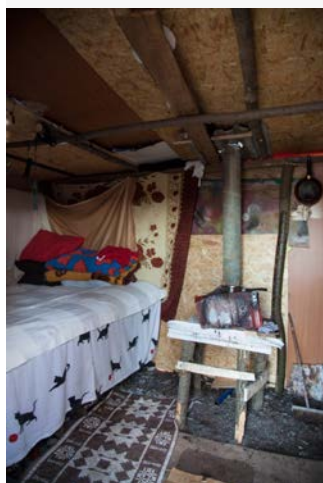
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[Chapt2 SubtitlesMarketresearch](#) (doc)
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[Chapt5 Interview](#) (docx)
[Chapt5 SthlmGbg27.07.13eng](#) (docx)
[Chapt5 Eurozine_Giving in EU_2014](#) (pdf)
[Chapt5 EurozineReview_2014](#) (png)

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[kap7_Konstperspektiv2015](#) (docx)
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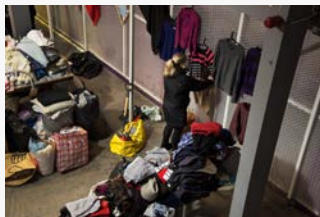
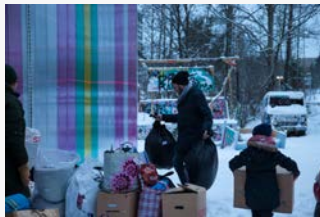
Chapter 5/Kapitel 5: Helenelund activists' protests/Helenelund aktivistprotest







Högdalen, collecting clothes/Högdalen, klädinsamling, 18/Jan, 2014.



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