



## **The Consumption of Democracy. The Ritual Politics of the Meal**

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**SAN DIEGO 2014.**

**AAR PANEL: RITUAL ASSEMBLY AND THE DYNAMICS OF DEMOCRACY**

**THE CONSUMPTION OF DEMOCRACY – THE RITUAL POLITICS OF THE MEAL**

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The woman (Kurdish) has taken photos from the celebration of St. John's evening. She wanted to give them to me [GBH], but didn't want to be interviewed herself. Yet, when we – after the service – were transferring the pictures to my computer, a group of Farsi/Kurdish-speaking women joined us to watch and comment on them. They happily identified people they knew from the Farsi/Kurdish-speaking part of the congregation and also members from the Danish congregation with which they were especially affiliated. However, they also brought up an issue that I would never myself have related to these photos and which would probably not have drawn my attention, had I been around during the celebration of St. John: the hunger. The women remembered precisely what each person had brought for the barbeque. Some brought chicken, while others could only afford to buy and bring some bread... some even nothing...

*Field notes, Apostelkirken, July 2014*

In one of our interviews, another woman also touched upon the issue of hunger. The problem is, she tells, that young male asylum seekers are not skilled in the cost-saving economy of poor kitchens and just want to live like Danish guys of their own age. Young Danes flock at MacDonald, but if an asylum seeker buys a Big Mac, he will not have money for next day's breakfast & lunch. "That, too, is why food at the Apostelkirken International must be free," she said.

*Paraphrase of interview with an Iranian woman, Apostelkirken, June 2014*

One more woman addressed the issue of hunger. She described how due to the demands of the stomach, the young Afghan guys disturb the cooks in the kitchen before food is ready and also mess up the line for the meal. They are too hungry to wait for the

first serving and still too hungry to wait patiently for the second. “So don’t make the prayer before the meal too long,” she said and smiled.

*Speech-in-action, young Iranian woman. Field notes, Apostelkirken, July 2014*

## 1. STARTER. DEMOCRACY CHALLENGED

It is generally recognized that the Nordic welfare states are the result of the secularization of the Lutheran-Evangelical Church’s *diakonia*. The long history of Scandinavia’s nation-based churches illustrates this point. However, the globalization with its influx of people of different ethnicities and religions into the Nordic countries has brought hidden premises of the welfare model to light: namely, that it is based on ethnically and religiously stable and homogenous populations. Special attention has been paid to migrants from the former Eastern Europe, from Africa and from the Middle East (Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan). The various political answers to the challenge demonstrate the case: Either the fine-meshed welfare-system is upheld, which presupposes closed boundaries; this is the solution of Social Democrats as well as the conservative right. The liberal alternative to this is the claim that private insurances must replace the public welfare-system, which allows for a society with open borders. While these two alternatives are intensively debated among politicians in the Nordic parliaments, the groups, whose democratic representation in and access to the welfare-systems are the issues at stake, are left without voice and vote themselves. Migrant workers, refugees and trafficked workers of various kinds are characterized by not only social and economic dispossession, but also a lack of political power to influence their own vulnerable situation.

In the Danish context, this situation has resulted in a schism in the, still, nation-based Church. On the one hand, we have congregations which, often with references to Luther’s two regimes, insist that the secularization and the separation of (social) politics from the (invisible) church must be upheld. On the other hand, we have a smaller group of congregations who find that, when the state fails and leaves groups of (non) citizens in a ‘state’ of emergency, the process of secularization must be rolled back. Once more, the Church must become responsible for its *diakonia*, and its services must be extended into the street. It must again become visible. After all, it is the body of Christ that the Church must serve and not a nationally defined group of citizens.

We find that the – more or less voluntary – migration, which is the result of an economically and militarily globalized world, calls for a rethinking of the concept of democracy as the present situation demonstrates the shortcomings of the nation-based, representative parliamentary model. Instead, we suggest that democracy is exercised whenever the places of the *polis* are renegotiated and redefined by the pres-

ence of those who happen – legally or illegally – to *inhabit* a particular space. Inevitably, this also implies a change in our understanding of the way that politics are carried out; the traditional verbal debates about abstract principles must be supplemented by speech-acts performed by flesh and blood bodies.

*Between church and kitchen – a culinary research project*

In order to develop and expand this conception of politics, we have engaged in a field study in a particular church in the center of Copenhagen. During the last couple of years, Apostelkirken (the Apostles' Church) has – due to its historical openness towards various groups of marginalized people: migrants, inmates, trafficked workers – entered into the public debate. The church is situated in the part of the city (Vesterbro) where, during the sixties, immigrants from Turkey, Pakistan and Morocco took over the small apartments that the working class left behind as they settled in single-family houses in the suburbs. During that period, the intercultural and interreligious Meeting Place (Mødestedet) was established. Today the area is marked by urban renewal and the immigrants' shops with vegetables, couscous and olives and the many pizzerias are gradually replaced by smart cafés and fancy restaurants. However, the area is still marked by its history. During the night, the streets are turned into a red light district and Apostelkirken (together with the independent churches of the area) opens the *Night Light Café* for the – primarily Nigerian – women. Also the local prison is still there and the former inmates visit *Café Exit*, another of Apostelkirken's social initiatives. Although the migrants' identity and ethnicity have changed from the more settled migrant workers to war refugees from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, they still travel from the asylum centers placed in depopulated distant regions to visit the Meeting Place and attend the service in Apostelkirken. Among these three groups, we have chosen to focus on the Farsi- and Kurdish-speaking groups among the refugees. This is due to the enormous attraction that this particular church exerts on Muslim asylum seekers. During the half year that we participated in the life of the church, the group of refugees attending the Sunday service and later the Bible study groups and Baptismal classes conducted by the church at the nearby Meeting Place doubled from the regular forty to more than eighty – and it continues to grow. This development has taken place without any proactive initiatives from the church itself apart from the attempt to serve – socially and spiritually – those who enter into its sphere; e.g. by having the service translated into Farsi and conducting the above mentioned study groups and Baptismal classes. If we are to speak about a mission among refugees, it is carried out by the refugees themselves. The refugees' conversions from Islam to Christianity have given rise to an intense, public debate. Some politicians surmise that the refugees' conversion is only a strategic move in order to have their applications reconsidered by the Danish authorities; the group of bishops in the National Danish Church discuss – and disagree on – whether the Church's relationship with Islam should be based on dialogue or mission; finally, the fact that several of the baptism candidates and con-

verts have been subjected to harassment and violence from Islamic asylum seekers at the reception centers have fueled the anti-Islamic debate at the political right.

Since the *sharing* of a meal is a very basic act of ritual action, which establishes or breaks down hierarchies and boundaries, we have chosen to focus on the distribution of food – of all kinds – and the eating patterns in and around the congregation: on the provision of food, the preparation of meals, the distribution of invitations, the participation in the meals – as well as the left-overs: the dishwashing, the sweeping of the floor etc. We have been especially interested in how the ritual performances (or re/de-ritualization) of the various meals affects those who participates in the meal. We admit: it has been a two kilo culinary research project between church and kitchen. However, the gain in kilos will allow us to speak about ‘consumed identities’, about ‘the consumption of democracy’ and ‘the politics of the meal’. The study has been carried out – and triangulated – through a combination of participant observations and in-depth interviews with individual churchgoers followed by presentations to and feedback from the leaders of the church, volunteers (lay people) as well as pastors. Our field work was carried out during the spring and summer 2014. In addition, we have had access to the quantitative survey that Jonas Boendergaard carried out among the Farsi- and Kurdish-speaking members of the congregation during the same period.

The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek has suggested that the only way the splitting of the gaze can be handled in a responsible way is through the (filmic) genre of the montage (1991/2000). Consequently, we have chosen to let field notes and fragments from transcribed interviews, which represent the particular place we have studied, interrupt our theoretical reflections.

#### *Disposition – theoretical reflections on democracy and space*

In our attempt to redefine democracy, Judith Butler’s speech given at the *Instituto Europeo para politicas culturales progresivas*, Venice in 2011: “Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street” has proved a suitable starting point. In her speech, Butler takes issues with Hannah Arendt’s ideas about political spaces. However, we will take Butler’s critique and adjustment of Arendt’s political theory a step further. On the one hand, we find that Butler’s focus on supportive spaces as a simple necessity for any political activity is right to the point. On the other hand, when she returns to Arendt and speaks about the mutual recognition of appearances as a precondition for the political assembly and describes these appearances as *visual* phenomena, we will draw attention to the other senses which are involved in any gathering of human bodies: *touch, odor and taste*. We suggest that these deep, bodily experiences function as important primers of visual impressions. Consequently, when the theories of space that we are to address in this essay have recourse to the Lacan’ian intersubjectivity, which is established through the gaze, we will speak about the *intercorporeality* that comes into being through the consumption of food. Butler’s question, the answer to

which we are trying to twist, is the following: “As much as we must insist on there being material conditions for public assembly and public speech, we have also to ask *how* it is the assembly and speech reconfigure the materiality of public space, and produce, or reproduce, the public character of the material environment” (Butler 2011). We shall argue that the answer to this question is to be found in rituals. It is the thesis of the REDO-project that rituals – and we will add: especially those which involve consumption of food – may exert an important impact on democratic processes and thereby contribute to the reshaping of society and provide grounds for an adequate response to local and global crises. Thus, ritual is not the outcome of social construction, but serves as a precondition of the construction and transformation of society.

In order to develop this answer, we will initially visit Butler’s reassessment of Arendt’s re-conception of political space in her 2011 speech (2); this will take us to our discussion of the problems that the restriction of politics to the sphere of the visual, in our view, entails (3). In turn, these reflections will challenge us to push the question with which we are struggling to extremes: Is it possible to ascribe political agency to those whose vulnerable situation prevent them from *appearing*? To answer this question, we will address various thinkers who have theorized on space as a social category. We will discuss Michel de Certeau’s reflections on *territorialization* (4), Walter Benjamin’s on *architecture* (5), and Judith Butler’s on *performativity* and *citatoriality* (6). However, since Certeau’s and Butler’s reflections – like much work in the post-structural vein – are carried out with inspiration from Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Lacan, it becomes a specific challenge to scrutinize these theories for the potential to move beyond, first, Bourdieu in order to conceptualize social changes and, next, beyond Lacan without getting caught in his mirror-stage. Thus, in our attempt to develop a more dynamic and inclusive theory of social space, we will not stay with these thinkers, but also bring in Jean-Paul Sartre to conceptualize *imaginative spaces* (4), Gilles Deleuze to involve other *senses* than sight (5) and Catherine Bell to emphasize the *difference* in citatoriality (6). Finally, we will return to Apostelkirken and apply these theories to our fieldwork data (7 & 8).

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”One of my worst experiences from Mødestedet was the first time I was to eat there. We all stood in line and when it was time to get the food, I realized that we had to pay for the food! I did not have any money with me and I had to borrow from the person next to me. I am still embarrassed when I see him for that! I think it gives the wrong signal when they ask people to pay for food at Mødestedet. If I wanted to buy my own food, I would go to a store or restaurant. The meal we share as Christians should be

more like a family. You don't pay to eat with the family. I sometimes volunteer to cook myself, rather than have people pay".

*Transcribed interview, Iranian woman, Apostelkirken, June 2014.*

## 2. BEYOND THE PARLIAMENTS – EXPANDING THE POLITICAL

Judith Butler's theoretical starting point is Hannah Arendt's conception of political space:

The Polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose no matter where they happen to be [...] it is the space of *appearance* in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men (*sic*) exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly. (Arendt 1958, 198. Emphasis added)

On the one hand, Butler ascribes to Arendt's flexible and transportable political space, which opens up the parliaments and moves the political discourse out into the Polis and its streets; however, according to Butler, Arendt is ignorant of the material *support* – literally: no matter (!) – which is needed for an appearance or an assembly to take place. An abstraction of space, as the one Butler finds in Arendt's position, is only possible for a person for whom this material support is granted. Butler explains her critique: "The material supports are not only part of action, but they are also what is being fought about, *especially* in those cases when the political struggle is about food, employment, mobility, and access to institutions". In addition, the fact that in order to be a political body the body *must* appear, inevitably implies that it is subjected to the gaze of the other: "I must appear to others in ways for which I cannot give an account and in this way my body establishes a perspective that I cannot inhabit" (Butler 2011). Arendt is also blind to the power systems that operate prior to any performative power that is exercised by a plurality. In order to give voice to those excluded from making a public appearance in the traditional arenas for doing politics, Butler argues for a broadening of the conception of political space:

Such a view disregards and devalues those forms of political agency that emerge precisely in those domains deemed *pre-political* or *extra-political*. So one reason we cannot let the political body that produces such exclusions furnish the conception of politics itself, setting the parameters for what counts as political – is that within the purview established by the, which those outside its defining

plurality are considered as unreal or unrealised and, hence, outside the political as such. (Butler 2011)

Consequently, she must reject Giorgio Agamben's concept of 'bare life' from his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995/1998) as an acceptable designation for those left outside the political space. Instead she claims:

To be outside established and legitimate political structures is still to be saturated in power relations, and this saturation is the point of departure for a theory of the political that includes dominant *and subjugated forms*, modes of inclusion and legitimation as well as *modes of delegitimation and effacement*. (Butler 2011)

The simple appearance in public space of those who are excluded provides them with political agency. Therefore also the shattered places of the excluded must count as politicized space. Consequently, any presence of 'bare life' becomes in itself a political action:

[...] when the body 'speaks' politically, it is not only in vocal or written language. The *persistence of the body* calls that legitimacy into question, and does so precisely through a *performativity of the body* that crosses language without ever quite reducing to language. In other words, it is not that bodily action and gesture have to be translated into language, but that the action and gesture *signify* and speak, as action and claim, and that the one is not finally extricable from the other. (Butler 2011, emphasis added)

Butler is aware that also Arendt's concept of "the right to have rights" cannot be abstracted from the body. After all, "the right to have rights" is only guaranteed by the possibility of bodily presence, since as long as the body exists, it can exercise 'a right' even when no rights are assigned to it. This final right can only be met by violence, effacement and destruction of the body in its very materiality. But even its destruction is in itself a statement: "when these supports fall away, they are mobilized in another way, seizing upon the support that exists in order to make a claim that there can be no embodied life without social and institutional support" (Butler 2011).

Although the appearance of one single body in space ought to be seen as a political statement of this kind, it is not capable of *redefine* that space alone; the action must be recognized as meaningful by others as well; an assembly – bodies in alliance – is needed. Butler speaks about this recognition as a process of *resignification* of space:

[...] a new space is created, a new 'between' of bodies, as it were, that lays claim to existing space through the action [performance] of a new alliance, and those bodies are seized and animated by



those existing spaces in the very acts by which they reclaim and *resignify* their meanings. (Butler 2011)

Finally, Butler draws attention to the kind of actions that are excluded in Arendt's political space of mutual appearances and she requests a different conception of what it means to appear. The exclusive focus on 'speech' – and on being 'seen' and 'heard' – precludes the aspects of life which sustain the body: "[I]f it is so, the body is divided into the one that appears publically to speak and act, and another, sexual and labouring, feminine, foreign and mute, that generally related to the private and pre-political sphere" (Butler 2011). In other words, when the bodily appearance is reduced to speech, the social and environmental structures and actions on which the body depends are excluded from the political sphere.

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In preparation for the interviews we were aware of the importance of place and perspective also in the research process and discussed how we could let the interviewed persons' own perspective and experiences be the starting point of our interviews in order to minimize imposing our own agenda and presuppositions. Some of the challenges of interviewing this group, which we tried to compensate for, are that they speak Farsi and Kurdish and to some degree Danish and English. In addition some of them are illiterate and their primary experiences with interviews are negative experiences in relation to the applications for asylum. As a means of distributing the power more equally, and compensating for the linguistic differences, we planned to provide each of the interview persons with a single use camera and asked them to take some photographs which they found to be representative of the life in and around the church. In the interviews, the participants' own photographs would then become the starting point for a conversation about their experience of the church.

*Methodological reflections on the interviews. May 2014.*

When we presented the idea of using cameras for the interviews, it was first met with great suspicion. We had not been aware of the risk involved in the documentation of several of the migrants' affiliation with the church in case the photographs were disseminated on Instagram or Facebook. Some of the migrants have chosen to go underground after their application for residence has been rejected. Others have not oriented their families in Afghanistan or Iran about their conversion from Islam to Christianity, which may trouble their relation to the family or even cause danger for their family back home.

*Field notes. Apostelkirken. June 2014.*

“Conversion is like playing Russian roulette. It may lead to a reassessment of your application for residence... [silence] ... but if it doesn't and you are sent back to Afghanistan ... it is ... puff.”

*Interview with a young Afghan man after the third and final rejection of his application for residence. June 2014.*

### 3. HYPO- AND HYPERVISUALITY AS DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGES

Although Butler – by the aid of Arendt – tries to open up our understanding of what it mean to appear politically, Butler's own re-conception of political activity remains within the sphere of sight: The body *must* appear. We think that Butler's emphasis on visibility is due to the significant role that video-recording with mobile phones played during the revolution in Burma, in the Arabic Spring, in Syria etc. By the aid of mobile phones local events were immediately disseminated beyond their own restricted space and communicated to a global audience who became part of the same struggle, albeit by distance. According to Butler, it is precisely this visibility which draws attention to the vulnerability of the body and its need for supportive spaces in order to make a political appearance. This is – beyond doubt – immensely important.

However, the volume of violence involved in political statements, which are linked to the appearance of the body on mobile phones and the internet, also appears to be amplified due to the easy and direct access to the world through the new mobile media. Consequently, we also face a radicalization of the body-language communicated through these media. Terrorism appears to be nourished by this possibility which may also be characterized as a kind of *hyper-visibility*. Without the possibility of having the violent events transmitted visually, the effects of the speech-act would be dramatically reduced. We also face – I think – a new willingness to martyrdom as a political statement. Again, the act only becomes meaningful politically, if it is transmitted to the media. Probably, 9/11 was staged with the horrific aesthetics of the collapsing towers in mind. The Egyptian police's harassment of women during the Arabic spring was put on the media with the aim of humiliating the protesting women in the eyes of the national audience; however, the transmission of the assault also invoked international awareness and condemnation. The atrocities at Utøya were designed with the aim of having Anders Behring Breivik appear in public, since he expected the court case to become a public performance. Without dissemination, the disgusting decapitations performed by the Islamic State would also be a less powerful manifestation. Thus, violence carried out in the name of politics seems to be fueled by the prospect of visual dissemination.

On the other hand, if we – with Butler – emphasizes that “the body must appear” for the performance to be political, attention must also be drawn to those bodies whose existence are characterized by a kind of *hypo*-visibility – either because they are ignored by the media as a consequence of the fact that their performances cannot compete with the more spectacular statements in which the volume of violence is turned up. Or – as often is the case with migrants, trafficked workers etc. – because their illegal status disposes them of the possibility of appearance. Consequently, someone must step in and draw attention to the fact that their absence, too, is a statement, albeit a very silent one.

To summarize: Apparently, it is not enough to move the political arena outside the institutions and into the streets, nor is it enough to supplement verbal speech as the medium of political discourse with bodily performances. In each their way the problems related to the phenomena of *hyper*- and *hypo*-visibility call for a reconsideration of our conception of what it means to act politically. The question the answer to which we pursue may be reframed as the challenge to find a conception of the political that is capable of ascribing agency to groups who are forced to live their life underneath the public political radar. We think Butler herself is aware of a solution when she refuses to see the struggle for “material supports” as only *pre*- or *extra*-political activities and claims that the struggle for access to “food, employment, mobility, and institutions” are political manifestations themselves. Thus, what we are looking for is a much more modest idea of political agency. We will suggest that any manifestation that is able to change the social dynamics that characterize a particular space and in this way influence the self-understanding of groups who identify with this space should count as a political action – even if these activities and changes never appear in public media. The challenge is to theorize these micro-interventions. As already mentioned, many theories of social behavior are influenced by Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the *habitus* which offers us a perfect description of static systems, but maybe not of how social changes take place. Neil Leach’s otherwise very illuminating article “Belonging: Towards a Theory of Identification with Space” from the 2002 volume *Habitus: A Sense of Place* continues in this Bourdieu’an vein. We will, nevertheless, take Leich’s reflections as point of departure. But we must reconsider the theories that he features in his argument in order to find potentials and cracks that may offer us a basis for conceptualizing social and spatial changes.

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One of our first interview persons was an Afghan man in his 20'es. In order to take his pictures for the interview he had gone to a church he had never visited before because he had heard from friends that it was a remarkable church. In the church (Church of

Trinity, inner Copenhagen) he had taken several symbolically loaded pictures of different parts of the church room, including himself in positions interacting with the paintings, altar, interior architecture etc. The first picture he shared with us showed the vaulted ceiling of the church. He turned the picture around to show how the church is like a boat in which everybody is inside and explained that the meaning of Jesus is that there is room for everybody - in spite of differences, because Christianity is a religion of mercy. The informant did not know that the ship is an ancient symbol of Christ and that the main body of the church is called the nave (in Danish simply the "ship").

*Interview with young Afghan man. Apostelkirken. June 2014*

#### 4. TOWARDS A THEORY OF BELONGING – SPATIAL IDENTIFICATIONS

In his article, Leach sets out to develop a theory of “belonging” or the “manner in which people actually identify with buildings” (Leach 2005, 297). He wants to move beyond the idea of architecture as static “signs” that may be “read” as “representations” of the narratives that form a nation’s “identity”. Instead, he proposes a more dynamic understanding of the “subjective processes” which are involved in the individual and collective identification with space. Homi Bhabha’s rethinking of the notion of nation in his edited volume *Nation and Narration* (1990) offers Leach a deconstruction of the unsatisfying dichotomy between, on the one hand, the architectural signifiers, and on the other hand, the signified narratives by pointing to the performances involved in the simultaneous construction of national identities and national spaces: “the performance is the enunciatory ‘present’ [of identity and space] marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign” (Leach 2005, 297). In order to sketch a theory of homeliness and belonging, Leach focuses on different features of this process and brings in three different thinkers’ attempt to conceptualize these aspects: first, we will have a brief look at Michel de Certeau’s thinking on *territorialization*; in turn, this will lead us to some reflection on the phenomenology of *incorporation*; second, we will forward our considerations on incorporation through a discussion of the Proust’ian moments of sense perception which Walter Benjamin’s reflections on memory and the experiences of space and architecture invite; finally, we will return to Judith Butler and her linking of *performativity* with *citatoriality* and discuss if it is possible within this framework to find potential for a theory of social change.

##### *Michel de Certeau on territorialization*

Leach’s starting point is Certeau’s conceptual distinction between ‘place’ (*lieu*) and ‘space’ (*espace*) in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984): Space is place made meaningful – ‘awakened’ – by practices that contex-

tualize it (Leich 2005, 299). According to Certeau, it is the “[o]pacity of the body” which in movements – gesticulating, walking, taking its pleasure – that “indefinitely organizes a here in relation to an abroad, a ‘familiarity’ in relation to a ‘foreignness’”. “[I]n its minimal degree [...] this process of appropriation of a particular space is a spoken language, that is, a linguistic system that distributes places insofar as it is articulated by an ‘enunciatory focalisation’, by an act of practicing it” (Leich 2005, 301). It is through these pedestrian speech-acts that the topological system of the city is appropriated; we *territorialize* our environment.

Leach draws attention to the *dynamics* involved in Certeau’s pedestrian language: Basically, “[i]t is about ‘tours’ and not ‘maps’” (Leich 2005, 301). A continuous touring is necessary since, after all, our ‘space’ is *never* there, but must be enacted repeatedly. The ‘places’ in which we move and have our being must continuously be turned into meaningful and homely ‘spaces’. We are, in other words, always *on our way home*. According to Certeau, our relation to space must be understood in parallel with the dynamics involved in Lacan’ian psychoanalysis and the mirror-stage. In the manner of the young child’s *fort-da* game, in which the toddler tries to overcome the “alienation” caused by the absence of the mother and her affirmative gaze, our “spatial practices are none other than repetitive gestures aimed at overcoming the alienation of all conceptual abstract space” (Leich 2005, 300). The fact that no meaning *a priori* is reflected from the place in which we live and have our being, is overcome by the repetitious enactment of meaning. When through our pedestrian speech acts, place is turned into space, we are *incorporated* into space and the space is *incorporated* into our bodies. In order to epitomize the performativity of space – that is, the fact that it is always in the making – Certeau describes it as a “traumatic mirror-stage.”

Architectural fetishes like memorial monuments, museums etc. can be seen as an attempt to cover up the fact that we are never really *at home*. Speaking psychoanalytical, they are psychopathic attempts, first, to colonize the sight by forcing a signifying presence onto the spectators’ retina and, second, to domesticate their bodies by orchestrating a specific behavior in public space.

#### *Conceptualizing incorporation. A phenomenological approach*

Inevitably Certeau’s reflections invite the question: What do we mean, when we talk about *incorporation*? In order to answer this question, we suggest that we have recourse to Jean-Paul Sartre’s ideas of the imagination – that is, his development of Husserl’s ideas of *intentionality* in his early philosophical works *L’imagination* (1936/English version 2012) and *L’imaginaire* (1940/English version 2004). According to Sartre, our imagination of a particular phenomenon does not refer to a photographic representation of it at our retina (as a *tabula rasa* or waxed tablet or emulsions on photographic paper), but to the intentionality – or our directedness – towards the object: that is, our *knowledge* of it, our physical *experiences* of it, and the emotional *coloring* that these experiences occasion. First, this implies that our imagination is not the

result of sense perceptual introjections alone; it is simultaneously a projection onto our environment through which our imagination comes into being. In fact, our imagination works independently of the actual presence or even of the existence of the phenomenon and is therefore also able to relate to imagined, utopian spaces. After all, any place to which we relate is – independently of its actual existence – an imagined space. Second, we may be even more precise in our description of the imagination; basically, our intentionality consists in *value-judgments*: Is this ‘object’ worth pursuing? Is this situation *worth* entering? Is this space *safe* to enter? Can I *trust* this person? But when our pedestrian patterns turn into pre-programmed habits, our awareness of the values that we ascribe to a particular space may fade away. However, our sense of homeliness may be reactivated when the habitual and automatic behavior is disturbed. This interruption may – as we shall see – be met with welcome or aggression. Finally, the imagination is not concerned with seeing alone, but involves all the senses. In fact, the deep senses of touch, odor and taste may – exert an even stronger influence on the imagination than visual impressions. Walter Benjamin is, as we shall see in a moment, aware of that.

Sartre’s ideas of the imagination combines *social constructivism* with *phenomenology*: On the one hand, our imagination is a social phenomenon, determined by the habits and discourses of the society in which we are embedded; on the other hand, it is also a purely individual phenomenon, as it is bound up with the bodily experiences of a particular person. The potential for change rests in the interface between the two.

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Several times, my [GBH] attention has been drawn to the fried rice cake which is baked at the bottom of the cooking pot when a bit of olive oil is added to the boiling of rice. The Iranian migrants in the international part of the congregation break and share the ‘cake’ among them. They call it the ‘tadig’ ...

Today at the meal in the *Apostelkirken International*, the Afghan cook, who had prepared the meal – delicious rice with dill and raisins – placed a piece of the ‘tadig’ at my plate. I was emotionally moved: Today, I – the researcher – was included as guest in their small ethnic meal which took place within the confines of the larger meal. Without words they shared their history and culture with me.

*Field notes. Mødestedet. 1st Sun. after Easter*

## 5. THE PROUSTIAN MOMENT – TOUCH, TASTE AND ODOR

We have seen how in each their respective ways way of approaching space Certeau and Butler have had recourse to the psychoanalytical claim that “identification is always specular. It is always a question of recognizing – or mis-recognising – the self in the other” (Leich 2005, 303). However, it is well-known that French feminist intellectuals as Luce Irigaray and Helen Cixous criticized the prominent position ascribed to the gaze in (male) psychoanalytical theory. In the mirror-stages’ schizophrenic split between sight and gaze, the subject-object relation was upheld. Consequently, the feminists suggested a replacement of the (masculine) gaze with the more (feminine) touch and advocated that the skin should be seen as the primary medium of intersubjective communication instead of the mirror of the eye. The touch of and by the skin provides us with different figures to think with; since no one is able to touch another person without being touched him or herself, the subject-object relation cannot be upheld. In addition, the experience of touch – and we may add: also of taste and odor – are more primordial sense perceptions. Although it is difficult to dispense entirely with the mirror-stage, we may learn something important about the processes in which place is transformed in to space by bringing in the other senses. Walter Benjamin’s reflections on architecture should be consulted here.

### *Walter Benjamin on memory*

In spite of the fact, that also Benjamin may presents the mind as a kind of “*camera obscura*, a photosensitive ‘plate’ onto which certain interior are etched in moments of illumination,” he also recognizes that “this only occurs at certain moments when a particular memorable event serves as kind of flash bulb, flaring up like magnesium powder to imprint that interior on the mind” (Leich 2005, 304). The question is now, what it is that works as the ‘magnesium powder’ on the mind – and therefore is capable of *incorporating* places into the imagination. In order to identify this enzymatic ingredient, Benjamin draws attention to the aesthetic moment in sense perception and makes a distinction between the *contemplation*, which he links with sight, and the *use*, which he relates to habit and touch:

Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by *use* and by perception – or rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the *tactile* side there is no counterpart to *contemplation* on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. [ ... ] [T]he task which faces the human apparatus of perception at turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is

by contemplation alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, and the guidance of tactile appropriation. (Leich 2005, 306, quoted from Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1969, 233)

Benjamin's two modes of perception, the optic and the tactile, may have inspired Deleuze's distinction between optic and haptic imagery in his film theory (Deleuze 1981/2003). Whereas in optic images, contemplated phenomena are placed in space and time and conceptualized as something, haptic images move us up close in order to let us 'touch' the surface of the phenomenon that we watch with the eye – or to 'be touched' by the thing ourselves. Contemplation separates us from the thing; haptic imagery makes us present with it. When a film 'goes under the skin,' it is due to the fact that the film oscillates between these two forms of visibility. In this case, the film has given us a real experience. Apparently, activations of the deep bodily senses like touch, taste and odor are able to work like a kind of magnesium powder that flashes up the imagination and facilitates an 'imprint' of the situation on the mind.

Although Leich initially went with the proponents of the role of sight in the appropriation of a place, he also – inspired by Benjamin – draws attention towards the involvement of other senses, which involve deep aesthetically experiences of touch, taste, odor – and we may add: sound, colors and light. He points to the "Proustian way" in which strong emotional experiences may, on the one hand, mark our imagination (*introjection*) and, on the other hand, later influence our perception of new situations (*projection*) (Leich 2005, 306). As he explains:

Mirroring occur not only in the engagement between the self and the environment, but also between that engagement and memories of previous engagement. There is an originary experience that is repeated in all similar such experiences. And in that process of *repetition* there is a reinforcement of the original moment of identification. In this sense, habit – as a *ritualistic* replication of certain experiences – is, as Benjamin observes, precisely that which consolidates the process of identification. (Leich 2005, 307. Emphasis added)

Although, Leich uses Benjamin's reflections to emphasize the element of "ritualistic replication" in the projective production of homeliness, we may use the very same thoughts to draw attention to the potential of change that exists in the "original moment". When haptic or tactile experiences are linked with an emotional situation, the repertoire of responses involved in the imagination may be changed.

In addition, we would like to draw attention to the fact that 'hearing' and 'seeing' are sense perceptions that may be transmitted at distance, whereas touch, odor and taste are senses that presuppose bodily presence. Consequently, they are even less prone to make – and we use a theological term – the *docetic* fallacy of abstracting political statements from situated bodily being. When people assemble, they push and pull in one another, they dance and mimic each other's movements, they step on each other's feet;



they smell each other's presence when fear captures mind and body, they smell the leftovers if no *supportive* toilets are provided; they taste food prepared by others, if the supply of vegetables, meat, flour is sufficient for all to be fed or they hear the rumbling stomachs when the supply of food is insufficient. In a stronger sense than is the case of sight, these bodily processes draw attention to the vulnerability and interdependency of individual bodies and the need for spaces that supports its most basic needs. As claimed by Benjamin, tactile experiences determine to a large extent the optical reception. We may therefore reinterpret the *intersubjectivity* which is often linked to the contemplative gazing in light of the *intercorporeality* which bodily experiences of touch, odor and taste may occasion. After all, recognition – as well as misrecognition – is not a feature of the gaze alone. True recognition involves care for the integrity of other bodies so that they, too, are capable of public and political appearances. This takes us back to Butler's claim that the struggle for material supportive spaces is the most political act of all. However, it also brings Hannah Arendt in again.

#### *Arendt and Jantzen on natality and flourishing*

In the trilogy on *Death and the Displacement of Beauty* (2004-2010), the Anglo-Canadian philosopher of religion, Grace M. Jantzen drew attention to a key concept in Arendt's late thinking: *natality*. Jantzen use Arendt's concept in her argument for the reconfiguration of the Western imagination from one marked by death and violence to one based on beauty and the flourishing of human beings and nature. On the one hand, we have seen how the new medial situation with mobile phones and internet access enables a (nearly) free and global communication of *visual* experiences and *audial* messages. But, we have also seen how, due to the strong impact of images, this globally accessible media have become weapons in various groups' struggle for power through the dissemination of violence and the documentation of martyrdom. No doubt this technical development may support democratic processes, but it also contributes to the *necrophilia* that, according to Jantzen, characterizes the Western tradition. Arendt's concept of natality was inspired by a passage in Augustin's *The City of God* (12:20), to which she returns repeatedly in her books. Against Heidegger, who famously argued that being-towards-death was the condition that enabled human authenticity, Arendt argues that the freedom, which characterizes the human condition, is based on natality. In her last book, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking and Willing* (1978), Arendt explains:

This very capacity for beginning is rooted in natality, and by no means in creativity [i.e. in making something out of nothing, rather than out of material embodiment], not in a gift but in the fact that human beings, new men [*sic!*], again and again appear in the world by virtue of birth. (Arendt 1978, 145)

As concept, natality helps us to think about human beings in ways that opens up the Western symbolic and challenges its *necrophilia*. First, natality entails *embodiment*. In the unfortunate mixture of Platonism and Christianity, death has been associated with the separation of the soul from the body. Consequently, the focus has been on “the eternal destiny of the soul, in some *other* world, away from the flourishing of the whole person *in this world*” (Jantzen 2004, 36). However, focussing on natality, will takes us back from the pursuit of “salvation of the soul for this other world” to “the welfare of human beings in this one” (Jantzen 2004, 36). Second, natality entails *gender*. With death, gender ceases to matter, but for embodied natalals gender is inescapable and of great importance; our bodily situation is always a gendered situation. Third, natality means *relationality*. It is, as Jantzen explains, “possible to die alone, but it is not possible to be born alone.” Human beings are born into a web of relations of which the very first is gendered; although the father or another person may take care of newborn babies, the coming into being is (still) mediated through the maternal body. Fourth, natality implies *particularity*. Whereas with death, place ceases to matter, we are born into a specific social setting. We do never speak from an abstracted nowhere, but from the places and situations which have formed our imaginary. Fifth, natality means *hope*. Jantzen refers again to Arendt, who saw natality as an “aspect of the human condition which allow for the possibility of making new beginnings, fresh starts whether large of small” (Jantzen 2004, 38). As such natality is the very condition for potentiality and freedom.

Although Butler probably would reject aspects of Jantzen’s fourth reflection on natality, we think that Butler’s claim for supportive space links in very well with Jantzen’s unfolding of Arendt’s concept of natality and Jantzen’s flourishing. However, Jantzen’s books consist of diagnostic cultural analyses; we still need a strategy to implement this change of value and here we must return to Judith Butler’s concept of performativity.

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Since more than 200 people participate in the Eucharist, members from the congregation often assist the minister – typically young persons from the Danish part of the congregation. But today, I [MRL] saw for the first time an ethnically not-Danish person – an Iranian woman – assisting the minister with the distribution of the host. After the service, I spoke to her, and she confirmed that she had never entered the altar space before. I think it was the first time ever a migrant has hosted the Lord’s Table. She told me that she had arrived to the church early in the morning: “As the women in the biblical stories went out to the grave early in the morning, I also wanted to meet the risen

Christ. While I was sitting in prayer, Niels [the minister] arrived and asked me whether I had slept in the church. Well, I hadn't – and I told him, why I was here. Then he asked me if I wanted to assist him with the Eucharist today. It was such a precious gift for me!"

*Field notes from the Easter Sunday service. Apostelkirken. April 2014.*

## 6. RITUAL AS CULTURAL AND DEMOCRATIC RESOURCE

According to Leich, Butler's reinterpretation of gender in terms of performativity may in a fruitful way be "transposed to the realm of identification with place" (Leich 2005, 301). But since Butler's conception of gender in terms of performativity hinges on the idea of *citationality*, her theory has problems with the explanation of changes. Butler makes a distinction between, on the one hand, the singular (willful and fully conscious) performance and, on the other hand, her idea of performativity. As she explains: "Performativity is thus not a singular 'act', for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals and dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (Leich 2005, 301, quoted from *Gender Trouble*; 1990,3). Due to the elements of citational invocation/replication, performativity may also be described as ritualized behavior. It is ...

[...] through the repetition of those rituals the spaces are 'remembered', such that those participating reinscribe themselves into, the space, re-evoking corporal memories of previous enactments. The rituals are naturalized through these corporal memory acts, and the spaces in which they are enacted become spaces of belonging. (Leich 2005, 302)

These collective enactments simultaneously produce the group's identity and its territory.

In spite of the fact that Butler's discourse of performativity is an extension of Bourdieu's debate about the social *habitus*, she also adds a critical edge to it. As Leich explains: "Whereas Bourdieu stresses the production of the subject through culture, for Butler, social structures have themselves been 'performed'. Hence performativity offers an obvious mode of challenging such structures" (Leich 2005, 303). The possibility of subverting the norms lies precisely in the demand for continuous repetition. The necessary *citationality* may be turned into mimicry, which – as Homi Bhabha has famously explained – is "invested with the potential to destabilize and undermine, as in the case of political satire" (Leich 2005, 303). However, we would like to draw attention to another of Bhabha's concepts from his postcolonial theories – namely, the *bricolage*. Whereas mimicry captures the – sometimes critical – attempt of (former) colonized people to adapt to the colonizers' culture; the phenomenon of *bricolage* points to (former) colonized peo-

ples' and migrants attempt to bring their own history into the hegemonic culture, which becomes a new hybrid culture. Thus, *mimicry* and *bricolage* is a play with sameness and difference. Through this play, the social and spatial structures that act on inhabitants – including migrants and other outsiders – may also be changed by precisely these habitants. We shall later draw attention to the subtle changes that happen when new groups enter into fixed performances; they cite, too – albeit with accent. In order to understand the significance of these small changes, we will have a brief look at Amy Hollywood's discussion of Butler's conception of performativity in the light of various contemporary theories of ritual – or ritualization – in her 2006-essay "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization" published in the 2006 book *Bodily Citations: Judith Butler and Religion*. Her essay brings Catherine Bell's argument about the significance of difference in ritual performances into our discussion.

#### *The play between sameness and difference in rituals*

It is well-known that Butler's second book, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (1993) was her attempt to avoid the liberal-humanist conceptions of a voluntarist self that the introduction of gender as performativity in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) – sometimes – engendered. In addition, Butler also wanted to reintroduce the materiality of gender and sex that her discursive analysis of gendered citations tended to dissolve into pure language. According to Amy Hollywood, two different theories of the ritual appear to be at work in Butler's re-conception of the gender in terms of performativity. In the *Gender Trouble* volume, Butler took Austin's speech acts and Derrida's play with sameness and difference in the endless row of cultural citations as starting point for her description of the gendered subject as the result of continuous performed – that is, bodily – citations. On the one hand, Austin had insisted on some contextual and intentional conditions that speech acts had to fulfill in order for the 'performative' to communicate meaningfully and to avoid 'misfiring'. On the other hand, Derrida had pointed to the fact that when these contextual preconditions were no longer present, the semantic flexibility involved in any (speech) act would once more be released and the act could and would engender a multiplicity of meanings.

Like Butler's theory of performativity, Catherine Bell's theory about the ritual also rests on Derrida's ground and is inspired by his play with sameness and difference. It is precisely the *differences* in the bodily citations that constitute a performance as ritual. An example: Ritualized eating *mimics* the ordinary meal, but it also *differs* from everyday eating in significant ways; you do not eat to satisfy the hunger of the stomach, the eating is only 'symbolic'. It is precisely this difference which provides the ritual with – not a particular meaning – but with a potential of meaning(s). We know that linguistic utterances like sentences or books are open to various interpretations depending on the 'supplements' available and acceptable by the

readers' community; this also applies to ritualizing acts. Thus, there is no intrinsic meaning in the ritual, but the context in which it is performed may 'read' it and 'ascribe' a specific meaning to it. But, still, no performance is able to control the meaning entirely.

In order to avoid the liberal voluntarist approach to the subject, Butler had recourse to another way of understanding ritual behavior, which was inspired by Marcel Mauss' *body techniques*. It is well-known that it was Mauss' body techniques which went into Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* and into Foucault's theory of the self as *discipline* and subjectivity as *subjection*. Also Talal Asad's return to medieval conceptions of ritual in terms of rules and discipline in his reflections on "Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual" in his 1993 book *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of power in Christianity and Islam* belongs to this tradition. According to these theories, it is the performance itself of the ritual which constitutes its meaning. Meaning is bound to the social recognition of the correctness of the performance. Thus, we may with Frits Staal speak about "The Meaninglessness of Ritual" (1979). Whereas Bell saw *difference* as the element that constituted the ritual, this tradition claims that rituals are constituted by *rules* and temporal *repetition*.

According to the Staal/Asad-tradition ritual activity is conservative; conversely, Bell sees ritualization as an innovative and constructive enterprise capable of stimulating new meaning and of reconstructing social structures. We, however, think the two understandings just emphasize different aspects of the ritual and that a continuum exists between the two positions: when rule-right repetition is stressed, the ritual confirms *status quo*. In this case, the play between sameness and difference is reduced to tautological sameness, and no (new) meaning is possible. But when the difference comes into play and the ritual is performed as a 'mockery' citation of the tradition, it releases new potentials of meaning. In the latter case, rituals may participate in the process of *resignification* of shared spaces. As we shall see that is precisely what happens in Apostelkirken.

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At the Eucharist the flat bread that is used in the Middle East region as a tool to fetch up curries was served. The unmistakable smell and taste of garlic disturbed my [GBH] contemplative mood and troubled the magical words that accompanied the consumption: "This is my body". It was a minor (nearly) invisible displacement; yet, it called for a re-consideration of the whole ritual.

*Field notes. Sunday service. Apostelkirken. Januar 2014.*

Something is happening to the preaching when my [GBH] listening takes place in a space in which so many different lives and stories are present. On the pews in front of me, headphones enable simultaneously translation into Farsi. I watch the reactions of the asylum seekers in front of me – the fumbling with the volume bottom, the noise of unrest, the bending of a neck, a sudden smile – and try to imagine what the sermon means to them. Before the words reach my own life, they are filtered through this network of imagined histories.

With a very few exceptions – mostly elderly Danish people – everyone in the church participates in the Eucharist. The arrangement of the room separates us into three long rows, which implies that the more or less homogeneous ethnic groups at the pews are blended when they reach the Lord's Table. I [GBH] recognize that some of the Afghan participants do not receive the bread and the wine, but 'just' a blessing from the ministering priests. I know that some of them participate in the Baptism class... My usual meditative temper is disturbed. Whereas my history provides me and the Danish child at my side with unhindered and uncomplicated – well, habitual – access to the Eucharist, it is for other participants involved with great danger to participate...

*Field notes. Sunday service during Lent. Apostelkirken. March 2014.*

Today, three women – together with the male Danish minister – hosted the Lord's Table: an Iranian, a Nigerian and a Danish woman. During the church coffee after the service, the new hosts at the Lord's Table were applauded...

*Field notes. 5th. Sun. after Easter. Apostelkirken. May 2014.*

"There is something very elementary and true in the way that A (young, male Afghan – rejected – asylum seeker) hosts the Eucharist. The word that accompanies the bread is: "Jesus!" Well, that is what it is. I like it. No need to wrap it up in a lot of liturgy. I always attempt to get into the line which he serves."

*Speech-in-action picked up from a young, female, Danish member of the congregation during church coffee.*

*Field notes. Apostelkirken. July 2014.*

## 7. THE IMPACT OF RITUALS – APOSTELKIRKEN AND THE LORD'S TABLE

### *Methodological issues*

As already mentioned during the spring and summer 2014, we carried out a participatory observation in the classic ethnographic tradition among refugees in Apostelkirken. Time didn't allow us to 'go native' – neither did we try to realize the ethnographers' imagined ideal. Instead, we tried to be transparent as researchers and to be open about the goal of our presence. We were open to let the life of the church influence our life – and the other way around: to let our experiences influence life in the church. First and foremost this was a matter of ethics, but we also found that it was the best way to establish the confidence in our persons and our work which was a precondition of getting useful 'data'. Consequently, we included the way we interacted with the congregation in our 'data'. In addition, our own emotional reactions to things happening in the church also went into 'data' (Kleinman & Copp 1993). We also worked with continuous feedback to the church's leaders, volunteers and employees. Again the motivation was ethical, but the discussions and the changes that this interaction occasioned also went into our 'data'. Thus, as it is generally recognized among (post-) modern ethnographers, the presence of the researcher in relation to the research object is not a problem to be overcome, but should instead be recognized as an unavoidable – but also very valuable – contribution to the 'data' of the project (Steward 1998).

#### *Muslims at the Eucharist*

During our first visits to Apostelkirken, we were surprised to see that so many from the Farsi- & Kurdish-speaking part of the congregation attended the Eucharist, in spite of the fact that many of them were Muslims. As mentioned above in the field notes, some were in the process of conversion, but that did not count for everyone. The statistic survey, which was carried out among the Farsi- & Kurdish-speaking part of the congregation during the summer 2014, happened to come up with an – for the researcher behind the survey and for us as well – unexpected explanation. The absolute majority of the group finds that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. In their view, if they chose to be baptized, they did not convert from one god to another, but just changed the way they worshipped and served the only God who exists. Thus, life according to the Koran was exchanged for the intimate relationship with and – as especially the female converts emphasize – the freedom in Christ. In their Baptism, they were incorporated into Christ through the work and presence of the Holy Spirit. Probably this explains why the Eucharist was of such a high esteem as they express through their participation and confirm in the interviews. But this we shall return to.

#### *Hosts and guests*

Although the applicants for asylum take up a lot of space in Apostelkirken – especially at the ordinary service – we became quickly aware of the role they were given as guests of the Danish congregation who acted as the friendly host(s) who open their place and also their private home(s) for the needy. The guests

repaid by eagerly doing the dishes, sweeping the floor, cleaning the toilets etc. The interviews confirmed that they valued this work. Yet, they did not describe it as their contribution to the community, but as their personal way of serving Christ.

In May we presented our interpretation of the 'data' that we had collected during our initial participatory observations to the Danish part of the congregation: the leaders of the church council, the two ministers and the many volunteers – and received, in turn, their feedback on our work. Among the more problematic issues that we presented this evening was the relationship between host(s) and guest(s) in the congregation. We drew attention to the fact that although hospitality creates relationship between host and guest, hospitality without reciprocity generates debts, dependency and hierarchy. We argued that the perfect host had to create possibilities for becoming the guest him or herself. We only presented our observations and reflections, but left it to the congregation to decide whether – and, if so, how – they wanted to act on them. They did. Already the following Sunday, two young Afghan men welcomed the guests to the church and distributed the flyers which guided the attendees through the day's service. In the flyer presented in three languages – Danish, English and Farsi – volunteers who wanted to assist during the service (e.g. as hosts at the Lord's Table) were encouraged to put their name and phone number on a slip. Neither we, nor the congregation, foresaw the impact of these – indeed, very small – changes on the life of the congregation.

### *Mimicry, mockery and bricolage*

As the field notes above document, the reconfiguration of the space by the presence of new hosts at the Lord's Table was favorably welcomed in the congregation – at least among those who stayed for the informal talk during the church coffee after the service. We find that it is possible to account for the changes by the aid of the presented theories on social space.

Although nothing is changed in the prescribed liturgy of the ritual, the fact that it is no longer the ministers (or the more stable members of the ethnically Danish part of the congregation) who host the Lord's Table, but a diversity of ethnicities and races, male and females of different ages, has *revitalized* the ritual. The tipping of the balance in the play between sameness and difference in favor of the latter has opened up the ritual and *enriched* it – not with a specific meaning – but with potentials for new meanings. Thus, each person in the congregation is allowed to interpret what he or she sees in his or her own way. Compared to the traditional performance of the Eucharist, it has now become a mimetic *bricolage* that is marked by the presence and life of those who host it on a particular Sunday. The imagination of their histories offers a new context in which the ritual can be reinterpreted.



In fact, the above mentioned participation of Muslims in the Christian Church's most important sacrament may also be described as a mimetic *bricolage*, the interpretation of which is left for those who want to evaluate it. To some bishops in the National Danish Church it appears unacceptable (as a strategic *mockery*), others avoid commenting on it, but to some the situation invites new interpretations of the ritual and engenders new thoughts about the relationship between religions.

The exchange of gazes between host and guest when the bread is offered at the Lord's Table becomes a moment of acceptance and bonding. But as already hinted at in the field notes with the reference to the funny incident with the garlic bread, the Eucharistic moment involves more senses than the reflecting mirrors in the eyes. Probably, it wasn't planned to be with garlic. Most likely, someone from the congregation had just brought the bread in a nearby shop on his or her busy way to the service. But since Apostelkirken is situated in a neighborhood with a population of Middle East origin, it just happened to taste of garlic. Consequently, the body of Christ was contextualized according to the ethnicity of the parish. The unexpected stimuli of the senses of smell and taste invited new interpretations of the Eucharist. To a young Danish man from the congregation, the Lord's Table expanded beyond this particular moment and place. The incident reminded him of the Church's international character. Who would have thought that garlic was able to stimulate Proustian moments? But again, the – in this case not entirely accidental – difference was just an invitation to reinterpret the meaning of the ritual. His interpretation of the moment may be illuminated by the grand old man in American cultural anthropology, Marshall Sahlins' 2013 book *What Kinship Is – And Is Not*.

In the book, Sahlins reconsiders the concept of kinship in light of a century of anthropological research. The argument criticizes the prominence ascribed to consanguinity in former anthropological research on kinship. After all, it was a Western projection of its own construction of kinship that was universalized by the anthropologists. As Sahlins' alternative approach to kinship is quite new, his thesis deserves to be quoted in full:

In brief, the idea of kinship in question is "mutuality of being": people who are intrinsic to one another's existence – thus "mutual person(s)," "life itself," "intersubjective belongings," "transbodily being," and the like. I argue that "mutuality of being" will cover the variety of ethnographical documented ways that kinship is locally constituted whether by procreation, social construction, or some combination of these. Moreover, it will apply equally to interpersonal kinship relations, whether "consanguineal" or "affinal," as well as to group arrangements of descent. Finally, "mutuality of being" will logically motivate certain otherwise enigmatic effects of kinship bonds – of the kind often called "mystical" – whereby what one person does or suffers also happens to others ... (Sahlins 2013, 2)

In every culture, this experience of mutuality tends to be hypostasized and deposited in a shared medium. In the monotheistic, Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – it is identified with the ancestor's semen – that is, “consanguineal”. However, a century of anthropological fieldwork has documented that other cultures project the experience of “mutuality of being” onto a variety of media. It may rest with the shared food, the shared environment (the soil), the shared spirit, shared sufferings etc. Sahlins explains:

... mutuality in being has the virtue of describing the various means by which kinship may be constituted, whether natively or post-natively, from pure “biology” to pure performance, and any combinations thereof. [...] however such consubstantiality is locally defined and established. Neither a universal nor an essential condition of kinship, common substance is better understood as a culturally relative hypostasis of common being. (Sahlins 2013, 28)

Sahlins also points to the fact that the Eucharist as ritual combines several of these *consubstantial* alternatives. At the Lord's Table we find the shared *ancestor* (Christ), the shared *food* (the wine and the bread), and the shared *cosmos* (the spirit). In addition, the very *eating* of the medium is an effective way of incorporating the “transbodily being”. Thus, although the official interpretation of the Eucharist links the ritual with the absolution of sin, then – from an anthropological point of view – it is an extremely strong ‘bonder’ of kinship ties. In the interviews, several asylum applicants added yet another consubstantial element to the Eucharist: the shared *suffering*. However, the suffering body of Christ was not seen as a vicarious suffering for the sake of our sins, but as a mirror and protesting witness against human suffering. We would like to point out how the physical elements in the ritual – the hosts with which one could identify, the consumption of food, the fellowship of a diversity of attending bodies at the Table – was able to change its meaning from a symbol of *necrophilia* (to use Grace Jantzen's concept) to a protesting testimony against it. We shall see how the ritual supported the flourishing of the congregation.

### *Eating disorders*

When in June we began our interviewing of the refugees in Apostelkirken, we looked forward to the positive records from the many meals that are served and shared in the life of the church. We expected to hear that the meals were important element in the bonding of the congregation and also that the meals made the church an attractive place for newcomers. So it came as a surprise for us that the meals *also* were situations in which conflicts of ethnic, class and gendered origin were articulated. The more so, as we – in spite of our several kilos participatory observation – had not ourselves become aware of these eating disorders. To us, the atmosphere around the meal appeared friendly and welcoming. Was it because we, after all, were outsiders to the community of migrants and refugees? Or: Had our lack of linguistic competences in

Farsi/Kurdish cut us off from important information? However, we think that the explanation is more complicated than that.

Several of the people we interviewed were engaged in the making and serving of the meals and – as already mentioned – they evaluated this task highly. What we heard in the interviews was that the preparation of the meals – as well as the dishwashing and cleaning afterwards – was a way to serve Christ. Although the tensions were felt by the participants, this strong interpretive framework for the meals meant that the potential conflicts were not played out openly. Seemingly, the experiences from the – often recently or awaiting – baptism and also the participation in the Lord’s Supper were able to minimize social and ethnic conflicts and the meals could be enjoyed for what they also were: nice food of Middle East origin, the smell and taste of which simultaneously reminded the participants of their own particular history and, on the other hand, in a very concrete – and Certeau’an – way turned the ‘place’ into a ‘space’ that was marked by their presence: garlic and curry worked like a kind of incense. Thus, we had to conclude that social theory alone was not sufficient to explain the complexity of processes going on in the congregation; theology had to be brought in, too.

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"I know, that for many Danes it is fine to come to church once a week, listen for an hour and then go home. But that is not enough for me to live on [...] It is as if I have had my inner organs removed – my heart, my lungs, my blood – and now I need new organs and new blood in order to live. That is why I need substantial food – spiritual food."

*Transcribed interview with Iranian woman, Apostelkirken, June 2014.*

## 8. HETEROTOPIC AFTERS

During our fieldwork in Apostelkirken, we were several times asked the question from members of the congregation and also from outsiders: How is it that this particular church has become the place to which refugees are attracted? Why do they use their sparse pocket money to travel from distant reception centers to a church in the center of Copenhagen? Why not a church in the vicinity of the centers?

As mentioned above we had expected that the social life in and around the church would explain it. To a certain degree it does, because it is the asylum seekers themselves who tell about the church to other refugees. In the interviews, we heard about this proliferation of the 'good message'. The interviewees themselves reported on the person through whom they had been *gospel'ed*. Several times, we heard the phrase: "He [or she] *gospel'ed* me". In addition, the fact that the service is translated into a language which the many refugees understand – that is, Farsi – also appears important. But both these explanations are, after all, only parts of a more complex – and we think: more theological – explanation.

If we are to use the categories of Jonathan Z. Smith to characterize different traditions within the National Danish Church, the majority of churches represent a highly *localized* version of Christianity. The National Danish Church is founded on geographically well-defined parishes, which presupposes the stable settled life of the members. In addition, the celebration of events in established families' life – birth, youth, marriage and death – and the high feasts constitute the backbone of the National Church's life and activities. Consequently, church attendance during an ordinary Sunday service – *without* baptism – may be sparse. As made explicit in the field note above, the spiritual food offered in this kind of church is not enough to feed a hungry convert, and especially not a convert without family and without a clue about the future.

Compared to this tradition, Apostelkirken is much more *utopian* in outlook. We have already seen how the particular parish in which Apostelkirken is situated influences the life of the church in subtle ways. However, the 'place' that ultimately defines the social space of the church is not *Vesterbro*, but the utopian body of Christ. The pedestrian speech-act performed by the congregation when it orchestrates itself into long hymn-singing lines awaiting the Eucharist is the way through which this imagined space continuously comes into being. We think that Michel Foucault's ideas about the heterotopic space as they are presented in his speech "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" (*Des espaces autres*) performed in 1967 in *Cercle d'études architecturale*, in a very fruitful way may be applied to Apostelkirken. Although in the speech, Foucault does not provide us with a clear-cut definition of heterotopic spaces, his description of the interaction between the *utopia* and the *heterotopia* perfectly captures the dynamic between the theological *utopia* – the body of Christ – and Apostelkirken's *real* space:

First of all, the utopias. These are arrangements which have no real space. Arrangements which have a general relationship of direct or inverse analogy with the real space of society. They represent society itself brought to perfection, or its reverse, and in any case utopias are spaces that are by their very essence fundamentally unreal.

There also exist, and this is probably true for all cultures and all civilizations, real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counter arrange-

ment, of effectively realized utopia, in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged, and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable. In contrast to the utopias, these places which are absolutely other with respect to all the arrangements that they reflect and of which they speak might be described as heterotopias. (Foucault 1967/97, 3)

Whereas Foucault speaks about the *mirror* that reflects the utopia into the real world, the church speaks about the Holy Spirit as the medium that links the worldly spaces with Christ; however, it adds – as the *etic* and *emic* description, respectively – to the same thing.

When in the beginning of September 2014, we presented our reflections on the interviews to (again) the inner circle of the Danish part of the congregation one of the ministers invited the group to reflect on the value of the bare presence of marginalized people in the church. Personally and theologically, the presence of the refugees, so he explained, reminded him of the fact that also the more permanent – that is, the ethnic Danish part – of the congregation was on a pilgrimage to a place that was not here. The refugees – in all their vulnerability – were a reminder of the church’s mission and safeguarded it against becoming too settled in the service of a particular society. Again, we may use Foucault’s words to characterize the minister’s position: The bare presence of the refugees turned the church into the heterotopic place which characterized the minister’s understanding of the church’s true identity. In addition, if we return to Certeau’s reflections on the performativity of space, which our pedestrian speech-acts continually keeps in the making, his attention to our permanent unhomeliness may be compared to the pilgrimage that the minister describes. Thus, on the one hand, it is the utopian theological outlook of the church that has opened up its social space for the refugees and other marginalized groups; on the other hand, the presence of the refugees prevents the church from becoming a closed space fixed by habitual performances without the ability to adjust to new situations. As we have seen, this dynamic hinges on the ritual of the Eucharist and the influence it exerts on the other social activities in the church – especially the common meals. And again: On the one hand, the ordinary meals get their meaning from the Eucharist; on the other hand, the meals simultaneously provide the refugees with a possibility to influence and define the social space – it becomes global in outlook.

We set out to answer two questions: Butler’s question “... *how* it is the assembly and speech reconfigure the materiality of public space, and produce, or reproduce, the public character of the material environment” which was supplemented with our own more edgy question: *how* persons and groups forced to live their life underneath the public radar were able to participate in the political production of space. Butler’s question prompted our theoretical reflections which, in turn, informed our interpretation of our fieldwork

in Apostelkirken. Our field work demonstrates how an extremely marginalized and vulnerably group in a very specific context obtained political agency by their bare presence. Without exposing themselves to the *polis*, the church has become their advocates in the public debate. We do not think that the knowledge gained from this specific case study can be universalized; it is so embedded into contextual and historical particularities that any attempt to abstract general knowledge from it will reduce the value of the study. However, we still think, it might be a good case to think with.

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