

1. School of Equals — Stijn Van Dorpe, Sarah Késenne • 17. (brothers) I'm not a star, not by far, no artist — Fatih •

33. *Perspectives of unlearning: How to learn unlearning* — Ayşe Güleç, Gila Kolb •

49. Notes Toward a Poetics of Care — Robin Vanbesien • 65. How to get into school in (not so) simple steps_4 stories — The Post Collective • 81. Notes on Support Material for a Module for Temporary Infrastructures: School of Equals — Sepake Angiama, Byron Kalomamas • 97. Growing up I could never grasp the concept of safety — Tilke Wouters • 113. Thank You for Your Complaint. An analysis and attempted dismantling of non-arguments in conversations with art school directions and staff — Jacopo Buccino, Anneleen Lemmens • 129. Catholic girls' school, local boys' school, KTA Oudenaarde, the royal mail, AW, KMSKB — Karel Thienpont • 145. Neon Yellow all she knew Björk she tells me to wear it more — Francesca Hawker • 161. Two Tales of We: Uneasiness at the Borders of Art, Education and Research — Janna Graham • 177. I first felt this thirst for artistic creativity when I was a young child — Saidou Mamadou Ly • 193. Our dream sequence for a Globe Aroma future. A series of thoughts written by the current team. — Heleen Debeuckelaere, Brecht Theunis, An Vandermeulen, Elli Vassalou • 209. Shadow fruit — Lindah Nyirenda • 225. Guys, pay attention, Branded — Bre_uwin

This article is about unlearning and dealing with realities such as the post-migrant society. It is based on our experience as a researching activist (Ayşe Güleç) and a researching art educator (Gila Kolb). Together, we gave a workshop on unlearning with artworks from documenta 14 in 2019. Furthermore, Ayşe Güleç shares some of her workshop practices on post-migrant realities.

In a first step, we will each outline our own perspectives. This already forms the first tool we want to propose: to reflect on the question: Where do I speak from? What are the perspectives, knowledges and privileges I am aware of?

In the second part, we will explain our understanding of the concept of unlearning, which was coined by the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In the third part, we will show some methods, resources and tools we work(ed) with. We developed these within several workshops and we would like to introduce them to you because we think that they will help to unlearn.

1 Where do we speak from?

Ayşe: As an educator, art mediator, curator and researching activist, I have both professional and personal connections to the subject of migration. After I studied Pedagogy, I worked for 18 years in a cultural centre in Kassel and was a team-member of the curatorial and education department for the preparation of documenta 12 (2007), documenta 13 (2012) as well documenta 14 (2017). Currently, I am working as a part of the artistic team of documenta fifteen.

The context of migration is characterised by the ambivalences in the field of visibility and invisibility, as well as by dominant visual axes and clichéd images. These questions interest me because they traverse spaces from private to public and from private to political. Because racism happens in everyday life, it's structurally imbedded in institutions and it is also part of the politics of representation. I am particularly interested in the embodied "situated knowledge" of migrants who, with certain ways of speaking, performing and with interventions in everyday life, on the street, at

school or at work, avert any form of attribution. In other words, I am interested in different forms of particular resistance, which I call affirmative subversion – following Spivak's affirmative sabotage. These are powerful practices which affirm and at the same time reject the ascribed roles and spaces.

I live in Kassel, where, on 6 April 2006, Halit Yozgat was murdered in his internet café in the Nordstadt by the NSU right wing terrorists. Halit Yozgat is the youngest and 9th victim of the NSU. Only one month after the killing, a demonstration took place, organised by the relatives of the victims, Halit Yozgat, Enver Şimşek (the first victim in Munich) and Mehmet Kubaşık (the eighth victim in Dortmund). Nearly 4000 people, mainly from the migrant communities, were taking part of the demonstration under the title "No 10th victim". There was no mainstream media coverage of this event.

Migrant-situated knowledge that is not related to an identity, actually takes the form of a perspective, in that it allows learning and unlearning to take place at the same time and

counters the usual narratives. Instead it creates another narrative that makes it possible to change them by weaving new, powerful and empowering threads. Initially, activists and artists established solidary connections with those directly affected by the NSU-complex. The questions as to who speaks, who is heard and who is represented in what way formed the starting point that enabled migrant perspectives and struggles to be brought to the attention zones of the "majority society".

If we take this perspective, we learn that individual migrants and migrant communities have been fighting for their own place in Germany (and I assume in other European countries as well) from the very beginning. From as early as the 1960s onwards, they have been the pioneers for better working conditions and wages in the factories, and have been active against exclusion and racism. It is essential to open up narratives on the topic of migration that irritate previous assumptions and unlearn them. As a child of a so-called "Gastarbeiterfamilie" (guest worker family), it is clear to me that in post-fascist Germany, the first and important labour struggles such as the Pierburg strike in

1973 were set in motion by workers from Italy, Spain and Turkey to fight for better wages and working conditions for all. Amongst migrant workers on strike, women in particular had a leading role.

Gila: I work as a researching art educator. Not only is the post-migrant society as equally present and relevant in my personal experience, but it also forms a concept within my position in the field of art education. Currently, I am working as a lecturer in Bern, Switzerland and live in Kassel, Germany. When travelling forth and back, I am aware that crossing the border without being checked is possible because I am, amongst other things, being read as a white woman. The ID Card by the Swiss Government describes me as a "Grenzgängerin" [cross-border worker].

I mostly work with future art teachers & art educators. How can I teach an anti-racist attitude from this perspective? Answering this question is probably just as hard as answering the questions of how criticality, self-love or democracy can be taught, especially in hierarchical systems such as schools or museums. But

just because a question is old and tough, there is no reason not to pose it anymore.

As I have worked within universities, schools and museums, I have noticed a certain homogeneity of actors and staff, including myself. On the one hand, I want to support the demand to change this circumstance, while on the other I ask myself whether this is even an appropriate logic. However, I think that universities, museums and schools must change their current logic in favour of logic of openness, accessibility and should the use methods and internal structures in order to become relevant to a different audience than the one they are currently addressing.

2 Unlearning with an example

How can art be taught and knowledge spaces be designed? What does *unlearning* mean – and how can it become productive for my own learning, teaching and art-making? We want to start with an example, an exhibition that took part in 2017: documenta 14.

Held every five years, documenta is one of the world's most important large-scale exhibitions of contemporary art, reflecting different artistic as well as social currents of the time. Not only has documenta always engaged with the art world, but documenta can also be seen as a site of negotiation of political issues: from the first exhibition in 1955, which aimed primarily to introduce visitors to the works of those artists who were ostracised in Germany during the Nazi era under the designation "Degenerate Art", to the most recent discussion about the whereabouts of the Obelisk (Olu Oguibe, 2017) with the quadrilingual inscription "I was a stranger and you took me in" on Kassel's Königsplatz. As Nora Sternfeld (2020) points out, the artwork with the title "Monument for strangers and refugees" can be

understood rather as a para-monument than an artwork in a public space.

Unlearning formed a major theme of documenta 14 and its art education. Unlearning is not about not learning something in the first place or refusing to learn – but rather about reflecting again and in a critical way on what has been learned by means of actions. Learning always takes place within hierarchical contexts, which are often not reflected. What has been learned should therefore not be forgotten again. Unlearning in the first sense therefore means to become aware of one's own privileges (cf. Danus/Jonsson/Spivak 1993).

Elena Agudio and Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung give another, poetic definition of unlearning with an invitation card to the exhibition “Unlearning the given” (2016): “Unlearning is not forgetting, it is neither deletion, cancellation nor burning off. It is writing bolder and writing anew. It is commenting and questioning. It is giving new footnotes to old and other narratives. It is wiping off the dust, clearing the grass, and cracking off the plaster that lays above the erased. Unlearning

is flipping the coin and awakening the ghosts. Unlearning is looking in the mirror and seeing the world.” (Agudio etc).

3 Methods, Tools and Resources

Paper snowballs

For an introduction and closing of a workshop when the group gathers together, there might be open questions or issues, which are somehow in the room, but not spoken out loud yet. This tool might help to change this situation. Making a snowball from paper also helps to reflect on implicit or tacit knowledge: “Where did you learn to make a snowball and from whom?” “How would you explain to someone else how to do it?”

Realisation

All participants receive one paper of each colour. On the first coloured paper, they write down their spontaneous answer to the question: “What do I want to learn?” On the second coloured paper, they write down their spontaneous answer to the question, “What do I want to unlearn?” There is 1 minute given for each answer, which is not much time to reflect.

Then, the participants are asked if they know how to make a snowball – and if they can

remember when they learned it. Often this is tactile knowledge is perceived as self-evident, just as knowledge is often not consciously reflected. Now, participants are asked to form two snowballs from the sheets of paper and throw them into the air. In a next step, participants are invited to collect two snowballs from the floor, which are not their own. Next, participants are invited to choose one snowball per colour and read it aloud. In this way, thoughts or wishes of the participants become audible in and for the room without being directly linked to a person.

A seminar meeting under the table

What does our body do while we learn? Who taught us that learning takes place sitting at a table and on a chair? What happens when the seminar continues under the table? What does the body do during this? What about paying attention? What about listening? How do you speak under a table? Just try it out!

**Work assignment:
Help an imaginary colleague!**

Imagine that your colleague asks you for help. She would like to teach unlearning and she would like to do it by means of a work of art that she finds interesting. What would you advise her to do? Work in pairs.

**Communicating Realities:
Migration-Racism-Resistance.
A Working Assignment by Ayşe Güleç**

The two proposed artistic-documentary films are very important for me personally because they focus our attention in a special way on the theme of migration, racism and the resistance. They were made at different times and work with specific means and strategies on the topics mentioned in the title.

Film 1:

Inventory – Metzstrasse 11 by Želimir Žilnik (Video 9:00min) 1975 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvCmKGZaTsl>

Film 2:

Mourning demonstration no 10th victim documentary by Sefa Defterli (video, 11:38 min, editing and camera Sefa Defterli, others are unknown) 2006 <https://vimeo.com/235347631>

Questions:

What realities do the films deal with? How do they convey those realities? What do the images tell us? What do the images convey? How do the images act? How do the speakers position themselves? Who speaks to us and how? How can the aesthetic strategies be described? How do the films connect with each other through themes and aesthetic strategies?

4 Feedback:

Please let us know how you were using the methods & tools! Write an e-mail to:

unlearning@aligblok.de

5 Resources:

Agudio, Elena/Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Bonaventure (2016). *Unlearning the given: Exercises in Demodernity and decoloniality of ideas and knowledge*. Zitiert nach: <https://savvy-contemporary.com/en/events/2016/unlearning-the-given/> [12.02.2021]

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Sternfeld, Nora (2020). Gegendenkmal und Para-Monumente. Politik und Erinnerung im öffentlichen Raum. In Jesko Fezer, Gesche Joost, Michelle Christensen, Daniel Hornuff, Bianca Herlo (Hg.), *Lechts und Rinks. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem Design der Neuen Rechten*.

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Ayşe Güleç is an educator and activist researcher and works at the interface of art, art mediation, anti-racism and migration, curating and community-based building and education. Since 2018 she has been part of the artistic team of documenta fifteen. From 2016 to 2017, she was the head of documenta 14's community liaison, creating connections between the departments, artists with sociopolitical contexts. She forms part of the Kassel-based Initiative 6.April and is active in various anti-racist movements. She coordinated The Society of Friend of Halit for the public programmes and the exhibition of documenta 14 in Kassel. In 2018 she worked for the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main as the head of the education department. From 1998 to 2016 she worked at the Schlachthof sociocultural centre in Kassel, where she was responsible for migration as well as local, regional, and European cultural networking. For documenta 12 (2007), she developed the advisory board documenta 12 Beirat, subsequently becoming the group's spokesperson. She was part of the documenta (13) "Maybe Education group" for artistic directors and prepared art mediators for the exhibition. Together with Gila Kolb, Carina Herring, Nora Sternfeld & Julia Stolba, she hosted the series of talks entitled "Learning unlearning" in Kassel (2017–2020), which was published under the title of "Vermittlung Vermitteln" in 2020.

Gila Kolb teaches and researches in the field of art education. Currently she teaches at MA art education, Berne University of the Arts & University of Teacher Education Berne, Switzerland. She is a co-founder of agency art education and editor of the trilingual blog The Art Educator's Talk. In 2017–2018 she led the research project: The Art Educator's Walk on documenta 14 in Kassel at the Institute Practices and Theories of the Arts, Berne University of the Arts. From 2016–2017 she was a member of the faculty of documenta 14's an education art education project. Her research and teaching focus on post-digital art education, strategies of agency and in art education, unlearning contemporary drawing practices in art education. Together with Ayşe Güleç, Carina Herring, Nora Sternfeld & Julia Stolba, she hosted the talk series "Learning unlearning" in Kassel (2017–2020) which was published under the title of "Vermittlung Vermitteln" in 2020. <https://aligblok.de>, <https://theart-educatorstalk.net>, <https://agencyart.education>, <http://>