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Film Practice as Interdisciplinary Research: a case study

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Short biographical note:

Vesna Lukic is a Lecturer in Film Production (Documentary) at Middlesex University. Her latest film *Two Emperors and a Queen* (2018) deals with a Holocaust narrative on the failed escape journey of the Kladovo transport.

Film Practice as Interdisciplinary Research: a case study

Referring primarily to my own doctoral practice-as-research project as a case study, this chapter explores cinematic practice as a mode of interdisciplinary research. The project traces the journey of the Kladovo transport, a large group of Jewish refugees from central Europe, who attempted to flee Nazi persecutions in 1939 via the river Danube. The majority of the passengers never got further than Serbia, where their journey fatally ended in 1941/42.

This failed escape attempt is charged with striking relationships to time, like the long periods of stasis that the Kladovo transport spent on the Danube waters. While drawing from large a interdisciplinary field, including history, Holocaust geographies and archaeology, I explore this journey as a multi-temporal event, with the camera as my main research tool. In this chapter I will take a closer look at some of the elements of the interdisciplinary encounters as they appeared in my study.

Key words: practice-as-research, Holocaust geographies, interdisciplinary research

Introduction

Doing film as academic research has already established its modes of meaning-making. A growing number of practitioner-researchers and an expanding body of knowledge around practice-as-research (PaR), practice research, practice-based research etc. in screen media provide evidence for this (see for example contributions in *Screenworks*; also Jones et al. 2009; Nelson 2013). They thus greatly add to contemporary discourses on creative humanities and research-based education (Fung 2017). While particular emphasis in discussions around the relationships between practice and research seems to be on the collision between theory and practice, i.e. ‘the difference between making something and studying it’ (Elkins in Nelson 2013, 16), more could be said about PaR as a mode of interdisciplinary research and learning (beyond this collision).

I am interested in extending the idea that film, especially documentary film, crosses boundaries between disciplines (Balsom and Peleg 2016) with ease, and has done so historically, merging/intervening into methodologies and practices of disciplines like (visual) anthropology or ethnography (Grimshaw 2001; Ruby 2000). I would however, like to push this further, and look into ways in which filmmaking provides more than a possible methodology, and offers new modes of knowing in academia. Further still, I am interested in the exchange between film and other disciplines (like for example archaeology, geography or history) in their ways of meaning-making, where film contributes towards different disciplinary fields, but also integrates discourses from diverse disciplines in the filmmaking process (for example – doing film as archaeological research (Kador and Lukic 2017)). This interaction between disciplines, as part of the filmmaking process, not only provides new research tools, but also enables new and more meaningful questions.

To illustrate my contention, I will take a closer look at my film, *Two Emperors and a Queen*¹ (2018) as a case study that explores PaR as mode of interdisciplinary research.

Approaching my project as a visual artist, my study draws from and contributes to a large interdisciplinary field, including film practice and scholarship on recent history, Holocaust geographies and contemporary archaeology.

Context

The film (figures 1 – 5), and the PaR doctoral project it formed part of, trace the journey of a large group of Jewish refugees from central Europe (later named the Kladovo transport; figure 1) whose attempt to escape the Nazis in 1939 down the Danube, tragically ended on Serbian soil in 1941-42. This journey that lasted for over two years, is charged with different relationships to time. Also, paradoxically, although the idea of a journey normally entails movement, this escape attempt was filled with very long periods of stasis, rather than movement (the group in fact only moved for about 10 days over these more than two years). Worse still was the fact that they were not moving, while being positioned against the continuously moving background of the Danube (and later Sava) River. This continuous tension between movement and stasis, as well as the variety of temporal registers behind this historical narrative prompted me to explore my subject matter through film.

Therefore, rather than approaching my research through conventional academic writing, I decided to explore my topic, posing and addressing my research questions through film practice. Far from being but one of the choices that I could have made in my methodology, audio-visual media provided me with both an optimal framework and the ideal tools to engage with the topic of my study in a uniquely relevant way. Consequently, I see my

¹ Film is available online: <http://screenworks.org.uk/archive/volume-9-1/two-emperors-and-a-queen>

specific contribution to knowledge in utilising the camera as my main research tool, and in engaging (with) the discourse around audio-visual media as a mode of unpacking complex layering of multiple temporal registers in a historical narrative (on the Kladovo transport).

This paper will trace some of the elements of the process of conducting this project, highlighting my filmmaking practice as a mode of interdisciplinary research. In order to keep this focus on the interdisciplinarity of my work, I will only marginally engage with positioning my film as a Holocaust documentary. This was however of some relevance for the doctoral project as a whole, where I take a longer look into contemporary discourse around mediating trauma/ Holocaust documentaries (see for example Hirsch 2004; Pollock 2013). My aim here was to outline fluidity of disciplinary boundaries, by tracing the decisions that I made as a filmmaker as essentially compatible to a variety of disciplines across the field of general knowledge. I will first look into how film and history, as my two main disciplinary standpoints, come together in my study, before I expand onto other disciplines relevant for my project, like Holocaust geography or archaeology.

Film and History

Two Emperors and a Queen (2018; Lukic 2019) is a 66 minutes long documentary film that (together with a 40,000 word dissertation) explores the failed escape journey of the Kladovo transport. The goal of this large group of Jewish refugees from central Europe was to reach the Black Sea coast in Romania from where they would continue on an overseas boat to Palestine (Eretz Israel). However, their ill-fated river journey never got further than Serbia. Without the overseas boat waiting for them in Romania, the little fleet carrying Jewish passengers was forced to moor in Kladovo, a Serbian town on the Danube. For the first 5-6 months (including the entire winter 1939-40) they had to live on three boats rented from Yugoslavian River Shipping (figure 2). The names of these three vessels, Tsar Nikolai II,

Emperor Dusan and Queen Maria inspired the title of the first publication on the Kladovo transport, Naftali Bata Gedalja's text 'Two Emperors and a Queen' ('Dva cara i jedna kraljica' – original title in Serbian, 1958); the title which I borrowed for my film.

After months of frustrated immobility the group finally left Kladovo in September 1940, but only to be moved upstream to another Serbian town – Šabac (figure 4). This is where their persecutors caught up with them after the German invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941. Most of the men from the group were shot in October 1941 in Zasavica near Šabac. The women and children were sent to the *Judenlager Semlin* in Belgrade (figure 5) and killed in a gas van during the spring 1942. Apart from several successful independent escapes, a group of about 200 youths were granted legal certificates for entry to Palestine. They managed to leave Yugoslavia just before the outbreak of war and thus survived.

Despite the existence of several monuments erected in memory of the group and a number of publications (Anderl and Manoschek 2001; Lahaw 1982; Lebl 1997; Mihajlovic and Mitrovic 2006; Ofer and Weiner 1996) focusing on their plight, their story remains largely unknown. The narrative on the Kladovo transport is of significant historical interest, as it brings to light yet another episode in the persecution of Jews during the Holocaust. My study is the first one of this scale in English, with previous research on the Kladovo transport being mainly in Hebrew, German and Serbian. My work also helps highlight this topic in a specific geo-political context, the Danube basin, which despite the river's centrality to the continent seems to have remained on the margins of Holocaust scholarship.

With this in mind throughout my project, film and history remained my two main disciplinary standpoints. I was hoping to establish a meaningful dialogue between them, while considering limitations, in terms of quality and quantity of information that can be

communicated, on both ends. For example, film is frequently seen as reducing historical data. Film scholar Desmond Bell and historian Fearghal McGarry identify techniques used by filmmakers in appropriating historical narratives: ‘compression (several characters become one), condensation (where multiple events are conflated), displacement (moving an incident from one time or location to another) and alteration (where a character expresses the sentiments of another)’ (Bell and McGarry 2013, 11-12). While I can recognise all of them in my work and am careful in balancing the accuracy of information communicated in my film, the cinematic discourse brings forth other elements, such as audio-visual stimuli that sometimes help condense the data into a multisensory impression. The richness of the multiple stimuli, and considering the rhythm of the overall cinematic structure informed my decision to reduce the text in my documentary, encouraging a conclusion that film does not communicate less, but rather in a different way.

Within film and history’s different ways of meaning making it is important to take a brief look at the discourse around Holocaust representation, especially with regard to documentary film, in order to position my cinematic work in this particular context. It could be said that Holocaust documentaries highlight the tensions between the notions of memory and history, where film is rather seen as a memory practice than a way of doing history (Landy 2001). Claude Lanzmann for example insisted that his nine and a half hours long film *Shoah* (1985) embodies the living memory of victims, bystanders and perpetrators rather than testifies to the history of the Holocaust (Felman 1991). More recently, these tensions are resolved in recognising both film and history as different memory practices, both acknowledging ethical concerns in mediating trauma (Friedlander 1992, Hirsch 2004). Furthermore, in recent scholarship mediating Holocaust trauma is central to unpacking the direct, embodied, visceral impact that film has on its viewer (Hirsch 2004, Pollock 2013), and

is of great relevance for my project as a way of thinking about historical representation as embodied knowledge.

Encounters in the archive

My research started in the archive of the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade, where I came across a brief correspondence between a cineaste, Stanoje Backo Aleksić, and Naftali Bata Gedalja, a representative of the Yugoslavian Jewish Community. Gedalja lived for a number of months with the Kladovo transport from December 1939 and is the author of the above mentioned first publication on their voyage. The two men briefly corresponded in 1977-78, because Aleksić wanted to make a film about the transport for which he was asking Gedalja's guidance and assistance in writing the script. Their correspondence forms the starting point for my own script.

Nearly 40 years after Aleksić and Gedalja discussed making a film on the Kladovo transport, as a filmmaker interested in doing the same thing (although in a very different way), I decided to begin my film by quoting Aleksić's initial set of questions addressed to Gedalja. Read as a voice-over, the filmmaker's letter positions my film as an epistolary form of address (Naficy 2001; Sobchack 1992), with the rest of the script entirely consisting of material deemed archival - letters, diaries and archive documents read by different voices and in the languages in which they were originally composed, German and Serbian. The documents were primarily written by the members of the Kladovo transport and immediate witnesses to their journey, but are combined with some other voices from the archive, such as Aleksić's.

The quotes that I have chosen for my script became my narrative frames. What I present as a kind of objective practice is the act of a bricoleur (Dezeuze 2008), through which

I am acknowledging the process of meaning making as deriving from the interrelation of independent parts. Each of these parts is decontextualized and removed from their original framework to which they maintain an indexical rapport, including being charged with specific temporal qualities (deriving from another time). These then collide to create new meaning when re-appropriated and put together into a new whole. As already Levi-Strauss pointed out, this highlights the process of doing as distinct, or even more important than the end-object (Dezeuze 2008).

Direct testimony appears to have a snap-shot quality, as, in its authenticity, it seems to precede any kind of aesthetic interference (Bruzzi 2001). This idea links to the historians' passion for the 'raw' archival material and the ways in which archival documents perform in historical narratives (Hilberg 2001; Steedman 2001) as well as in documentary films (see for example *Danube Exodus* 1998). Therefore, in choosing to make an 'epistolary narrative' (Naficy 2001) I am sharing this passion for the rawness of archival material that I am exposing to the viewer's gaze. In this way, my film also raises the key documentary questions of address (Bruzzi 2001; Sobchack 1992); who were the letters meant for and who do I address through them? As someone who is involved in making a film about the Kladovo transport, which is something that Gedalja and Aleksić never accomplished, I am fundamentally responding to the text from Aleksić's letter. With my own directorial position I take up, extend and complicate Aleksić's auteurist approach to the Kladovo transport. That is, I attempt to decentre the voice of the film from my own directorial vision towards the voices of the people caught up in the history of the transport. In using the archival sources, I emphasize the journey itself as a temporal event, linking the historical moment of the journey in 1939-42 with the 'now' of the making of my film (2013-18). Through the reference to Aleksić and Gedalja I am also incorporating the meanwhile, joining the dots in time that point towards similar (yet very different) memory practices.

Holocaust geographies: Danube as a Holocaust Landscape

We got our drinking water from the ice from the Danube. Almost everybody contracted dysentery, lice and scabies. Our food was brought from the shore. That was organized somehow by the Yugoslavian Jews. Every day was the same: twice a day tea with schnapps, once noodles with plum jam, and alternatively with minced meat. People had scurvy, I had severe furunculosis all over my body due to the lack of vitamins. (Reich 2014, 41; translated from German by T. Kador)

Herta Reich, one of the passengers in Kladovo, gives evidence of a corporeal response to the traumatic circumstances in which the members of the transport found themselves, especially during the winter of 1939-40. Illness and disease came as the result of literally consuming the landscape – as there was no other way of getting drinking water. The passengers, confined to the space of the boats, had to melt down the ice from the surface of the river. Although, on the other hand, it is possible that the winter and the cold weather may have prevented a number of diseases from spreading further and Herta Reich reports outbreaks of Malaria, Typhoid and Polio during the following spring when the weather was milder. While they were drinking the river, the food came from the firm ground – from the shore – where they were not allowed to go for more than one hour per day. The monotonous diet weakened their bodies further. They had no choice but to sit still while they were getting weaker, hoping that the time will move on and the season will change. In Herta Reich's own words, '[w]e were waiting. For spring, for a little bit of sun and warmth.' (Reich 2014, 41; translated from German by T. Kador)

‘The heavy materiality of Danube waters’ (Coates 2013, 30) gets a new meaning during the Holocaust. A much-tested migration route away from perils of the Nazi rule (at least until October 1941; see Ofer 1990; Patek 2013) the Danube binds together and puts into context geographical locations as well as narrative standpoints in the journey of the Kladovo transport. It could be said in the words of Simone Gigliotti, that for these passengers the river becomes a ‘cumulative itinerary of landscapes and traumatic geographies’ (2009, 5). Far from being a fixed location, or a colourful backdrop of and in the historical narrative, the Danube is not only a place, but also a chronometer that sets the rhythm of this failed escape journey, both physically and metaphorically.

As a transit route, the river calls for critical engagement with movement and mobility in relation to Holocaust trauma (Cole 2016; Gigliotti 2009). The ‘hidden Holocaust’ (Gigliotti 2009) on the rails, roads or rivers, in trains, cars or boats implies the spaces in-between the already recognised places of trauma such as concentration camps or ghettos (for example Cole 2003; Gutman and Berenbaum 1994; Megargee and Dean 2012). Paths of transit (Cole 2016), and the vehicles used to facilitate movement and extermination – objects of transit (Gigliotti 2009), are witnesses of a particular kind of the Holocaust trauma. They seem to point primarily towards embodied, personalised experiences of places and spaces of trauma, where the role of the senses seems particularly intensified (Cole 2016; Gigliotti 2009).

However, unlike the vast research on the destinations of the Holocaust journeys, and within the context of the growing field of Holocaust geographies (Cole 2016, Giaccaria & Minca 2016, Knowles et al 2014) the scholarship on transit seems to be rather scarce (Cole 2016; Gigliotti 2009). Both Simone Gigliotti and Tim Cole describe the extremely harsh conditions in cattle cars, in which people were transferred to the concentration camps, and

which in a way became signifiers of movement and mobility during the Holocaust (Gigliotti 2009). Crowded into the confined space of the cattle car, people frequently were not able to sit down, because of the lack of space. Deprived of air, food or water while having to endure the stench of faeces, sweat and, in some cases, dead human bodies, these relatively short journeys were extremely traumatising (Cole 2016; Gigliotti 2009).

This brutal attack on the senses, emphasizes the human body as the actual place where the trauma happened. Displaced and disoriented people experienced movement (of the train) without the awareness of where they were or where they were heading, which further worsened the trauma. Survivors' testimonies give evidence that their attempts to address the places where they were, or were passing through resulted in describing how they were feeling or what they were experiencing. In this way, the experienced bodily trauma becomes a way to address the spatiality of the Holocaust, as the body becomes a site, a liminal space like roads and rivers – a place in between locations.

Trauma and deprivation in relation to experiencing the journey and movement more generally as well as displacement are extremely relevant in considering the conditions in which the journey of the Kladovo transport took place. Although ghettos or concentration camps were not the originally intended destinations of the journey, the passengers still had to endure extremely harsh living conditions that frequently resembled living in a camp or ghetto for very long periods of time, as it is exemplified by the six months they spent on board ships in the winter port of Kladovo. Herta Reich provides one of the testimonies that describe the confinement through the feeling of one's own sick body (see above).

Throughout the journey this frequently frustrated mobility of the passengers sits in tension with the constant flux of the Danube (and later Sava) waters. The continuous spatio-temporal movement of the Danube waters in this riverine landscape positions my interest in movement and mobility as registers of time. However, for the Kladovo transport, the river as

a fluid denominator of passing time contrasts the stasis – the absence of movement – as the dominant feature of their journey. Instead of moving, time seems to stand still; or perhaps more accurately, while time elsewhere (like the river's flow) is moving on, the members of the Kladovo transport are standing still.

This collision of different temporalities in the same landscape, opens up a space for cinematic intervention. Charlesworth (2004) recommends that historians should follow cinematic gaze in approaching the spatiality of the past. He refers to Claude Lanzmann's 'topographic' film *Shoah* (1985) in which the camera dwells on the locations where Holocaust was implemented, moving slowly back and forth, fixing the viewers gaze for extended periods of time onto the places where extreme trauma had been experienced. Through the sensorial stimuli film expands the already interdisciplinary field of Holocaust geographies. My cinematic work on the Kladovo transport enhances the possibilities for spatial engagement with this historical narrative, closely binding together the relevant geographical locations with Holocaust trauma.

Filming the locations as embodied research

Any study begins with lived experience, being there, in the world. It must necessarily be embodied, cantered in a body opening out itself to the world, a carnal relationship. The exploitations of basic bodily dyads provides one entry point into the study of place and landscape. A concentric graded sense of place and landscape provides another basic way in which meaning may be explored. Both originate in the body and extend outwards. (Tilley 2004, 29)

In my film, the frames are set to show the places, from the average height of an adult, following Tilley's (1994) idea of the human body as the yardstick, without extreme camera angles. The camera is mainly static, positioned on a tripod. I am interested in emphasizing two main ideas through the positioning of the camera; first, stasis, that is absence of movement, as a central theme in any narrative on the Kladovo transport, and, second, loss - absence of people – as a particular commentary on places, such as those shown in the film, where the Holocaust was experienced, memorialized or forgotten (Cole 2016). Allowing the viewer to set the course for her own gaze within the frame, while showing the place 'empty', the static camera seems to correspond better with loss and stasis. A more 'shaky', hand-held, camera perspective would signal a corporeal presence of a subject (i.e. the person holding the camera) and thus engage with different kinds of aesthetic implications (Hesselberth 2014). In a static shot (using a tripod), I leave the viewer alone to find her own way through the image or to follow the guidance of the voice over. Although passers-by appear in some of the shots, I aim to mediate a sense of emptiness.

Using long shots of spaces that are now largely uninhabited, the camera signals the slow passage of time and the absence of people – implying the absent members of the Kladovo transport. This videographic record is evidence of 'having been there', but as Godard points out – only 'after the deed' (in Ranciere 2006, see also Bazin 2005). However, while the long duration of shots and the visual record of the places refer to the attempt to incite a sort of 'existential authenticity' (Rickly-Boyd 2013) through film, I am aware that my attempt to truly 'walk in the footsteps of the past' is futile and necessarily leads to failure to truly stand for or represent the journey of the Kladovo transport. Nonetheless, through my own gaze and physical presence in and of the landscapes once inhabited by the members of the Kladovo transport, as manifested through film and through my writing, I intervene in and transform 'the past'.

This personalized scope of the environment implies embodied experience not only of the passengers from the Kladovo transport at the time, but also my own, as a researcher visiting and filming the same locations. These two very different positions in time – the one of the refugees nearly 80 years ago and my own in the present – share (albeit very different) visceral engagements with the places and spaces of interest. While I can only make very limited claims of knowing what the (sensorial) experiences of the refugees were, my recordings through the camera lens represent a mapping exercise that positions our shared experience of the landscape.

Film as embodied experience of time

‘[Film’s] significance is constituted in its emergence and existence to a world that is encountered through an active and embodied gaze that shares the materiality of the world and inscribes temporality as the concrete spatiality of the situation.’ (Sobchack 1992, 62).

It is in/through film that all the research elements, including various interdisciplinary perspectives, come together. For this reason, I wish to further consider film’s physical qualities – as a set duration of time that delivers certain audio-visual material – and in what way it can inform an understanding of embodiment. In order to do that, I like to imagine that I can bring the viewer into the landscape where I filmed, and will therefore look at the film as a landscape. Similar to a landscape, a film, as a time-based medium, provides a group of people (an audience) with a measurable temporal platform for shared engagement with its content (Ingold 1993). In this sense – sharing of time, of the duration of a film (even though not necessarily in the same place and at the same time), is a social experience in a similar

way as the sharing of an environment – only instead of physical space, in film, we are faced with the mediated or projected content. Therefore, I am considering the measurable duration of time of the audio-visual material, to be a physical platform for a socially sharable experience not only *in* but also *of* time (implying multiple personal time registers that co-resonate).

My interest in the temporality of cinematic image is greatly informed by the phenomenological discourse in film studies. According to Andre Bazin, film has the particular status with ‘real’ time (Bazin 2005). This perspective highlights film’s relationship with the lived, physical (‘real’) world as well as suggests that the experience of watching a film is necessarily embodied, as the film is (and can only be) viewed from within time. This thread of thought is picked up in more recent film theory by theorists like Malin Walhberg (2008), Vivian Sobchack (1992, 2004) and Laura U. Marks (2000), and is of pivotal importance in understanding film in the context of embodiment.

Sobchack continues Bazin’s argument in further stressing the physicality of cinematic presence as a primarily temporal category. ‘Embodied gaze’ foregrounds the viewer’s corporeal being in front of a screen as individualised experience of time in the physical world; or more precisely, as lived experience in/of the shared environment between the flickering image and the world of materials. Walhberg identifies the ‘time-space meanability’ and ‘archive memory of film’ as two main elements that complicate our approach to temporality in relation to film (Walhberg 2008). Both seem to point to the problem of the liminal quality of cinematic media in which time is imbued with physical qualities. In the first case, time appears intrinsically interwoven with space and brings to mind Henri Bergson’s concept of duration (*la durée*), where the evasiveness of time is grounded in our experience, and although perceived as/in continuous movement it consists in fact of succession of spatial fragments (Bergson 2005). In this sense, our experience of time directly reflects the way the

cinematic apparatus works (Doane 2002). In the second case, the ‘archive memory of film’ (Walhberg 2008, see also Doane 2002), frames the discourse around film as being one of the ‘technologies of memory’ (Stiegler 2011). It refers to the capacity of film to store, preserve and reproduce on demand images of/from the past. The problem Walhberg refers to in this case is the tension between two tenses: the past that the image not only testifies to but also embodies, and the present which relates to our perception of the movement of the image, as happening right here and now in front of us. Either way, in the words of Vivian Sobchack; ‘[t]he images of a film exist in the world as a temporal flow...’ (Sobchack 1992, 60), and again, refer to time as the main coordinate in addressing the physicality of film.

While throughout the process of editing my film thinking with Sobchack and Walberg was instrumental in making me vigilant to the physicality of cinematic time, Marks’ (2000) ‘haptic visuality’ represented the central theoretical discourse in imagining my film and (together with the historical narrative on the Kladovo transport) choosing camera frames and types of shots.

Picking up Sobchack’s ideas on ‘embodied gaze’ and combining them with Riegl’s separation between optical and haptic images, Marks explores the surface of cinematic images, as inviting a tactile engagement with film. In ‘haptic visuality’, the eyes ‘function like organs of touch’ (Marks 2000, 162). She suggests that: ‘Haptic images... invite the viewer to respond to the image in an intimate, embodied way, and thus facilitate the experience of other sensory impressions...’ (Marks 2000, 2). In this context, the physical experience of watching a film involves our sensorial engagement with the ‘skin of the film’, or in her words: ‘[h]aptic looking tends to move over the surface of its object rather than to plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture’ (Marks 2000, 162). This conceptual framework was instrumental in expanding the focus on cinema

and time with the exploration of the cinematic image as a surface that enables the exchange between the viewer and the viewed.

Thinking about the haptic quality of the images that I captured with my camera and the role of the senses in watching the film have been very important for my filmmaking process. I wish to incite the audience of my film to think about, or even respond through their senses, what it must have been like for the members of the Kladovo transport to partake in this journey. What was it like to live in confined spaces of these cold river boats for months on end, sometimes drinking the water from the river, with only two toilets per boat (and each boat having over 300 people on board)? And later in Šabac, more confined spaces, constant anticipation to hear the news about when they will be moving on; then the loss of any hope, months spent in a concentration camp... Trying to imagine the frustration myself, in order to be able to communicate it to the viewer through audio-visual means, I realized that I tend to film the locations from very close up. Looking through my material, it is dominated by details and close-up explorations of the textures of the places. I spent hours filming floors, walls, the ground, grass, and then, almost at the end I would capture several establishing shots, in order to allow the viewer to orient herself in the space. By filming from a very close range, I create almost abstract stills (figure 3), that dissolve constructive elements of places – making the viewer face the surface of spaces, once experienced by the protagonists in my film. Being detached from the location (through the close-up), the image offers the textures of the materials (water, wood, grass, metal even spider webs) for the experiential engagement with the places. While this kind of reflection mainly addresses the image detached from sound or duration, it still foregrounds the idea of film as a specific medium that involves more than visual perception, and, as such, a way to communicate (to the viewer) the feeling of ‘being there’.

Conclusion

Hitchcock's premonition will come true: a camera-consciousness which will no longer be defined by the movements it is able to follow or make, but by the mental connections it is able to enter into. And it becomes questioning, responding, objecting, provoking, theorematizing, hypothesizing, experimenting, in accordance with an open list of logical conjunctions ('or', 'therefore', 'if', 'because', 'actually', 'although...'), or in accordance with the functions of thought in a *cinéma-vérité*, which, as Rouch says, means rather truth of cinema [*vérité du cinéma*]. (Deleuze 1989, 23)

As this paper aimed to demonstrate, thinking through/with cinematic practice allowed me to bring together different academic disciplines. I chose the term 'interdisciplinary' to describe my research, rather than for example multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary, because this term implies coming together of different (particular) disciplinary standpoints that - although they maintain certain autonomy - exchange and bring their respective ways of meaning-making into a coherent whole. This is different from either transcending disciplinary boundaries or working in parallel on multiple disciplines, although to expand on this distinctions further, would exceed the remit of this contribution.

In my study, working together with the already blurred boundaries between contemporary academic disciplines is largely mediated through filmmaking practice. Thinking through the cinematic elements allows me to juxtapose and layer different temporalities in a uniquely relevant way for academic knowledge, because of film's relationship with time. Therefore, the cinematic discourse facilitates gathering and organising of multiple temporalities, and provides me with an optimal framework for engaging with them; as I feel that I am working directly *with* and *in* time. Furthermore, because I work with film I am conscious of time continuously (especially while also working against a looming deadline). My embodied experience of time manifests itself through an awareness of different and simultaneous time registers which I use as my primary material. Therefore, in summary,

just as no single discipline holds a patent on studying time, film in a PaR context is an ideally interdisciplinary approach to meaning making within and without academia.

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Figures

Figure 1. Still from Two Emperors and a Queen: Kladovo transport.

Figure 2. Still from Two Emperors and a Queen: boat Tzar Nikolai II.

Figure 3. Still from Two Emperors and a Queen: inside the boat.

Figure 4. Still from Two Emperors and a Queen: the old mill in Sabac.

Figure 5. Still from Two Emperors and a Queen: Old Fairground.



Old mill



Old Fairground
Judenlager Semlin

