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## 'The dead are coming': acts of citizenship at Europe's borders

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### ABSTRACT

This article combines the research agenda of the acts of citizenship literature with reflections on emancipatory theatre. I examine the Centre for Political Beauty's activity-based artwork 'The dead are coming' which problematizes the cruelties of the European border regime in symbolically charged spaces in the German public. Focusing particularly on the roles available to 'actors' and 'spectators', and the directionality of the message conveyed through the artwork, I examine how the performance subverts the 'sites' and 'scales' of citizenship. My analysis indicates that the artwork's subversive potential emerges not only from the political vision conveyed by the artist collective, but also from the way in which others become involved in the performance. Acts of political beauty thus most extensively challenge instituted citizenship's orientalist anchoring, reverse status-based role allocations and subvert the structural violence of borders when the performance enables the enactment of novel forms of political agency and solidarity.

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## Introduction

A group of people, armed with spades and shovels, runs on the Platz der Republik (Square of the Republic), a lawn linking the German Parliament and the Chancellery, and starts digging holes into the ground; soon several rows of graves become visible which are decorated with flowers, candles and crosses carrying inscriptions such as 'borders kill', 'nobody is illegal' or 'final stop Mediterranean Sea'. The symbolic graveyard forms a memorial for individuals who died in their attempt to enter the European Union (EU), never receiving a decent burial. This activity-based artwork is part of the Zentrum für Politische Schönheit's (Centre for Political Beauty's, CPB) multistage performance 'Die Toten kommen' ('The dead are coming'). The performance – of which the creation of the memorial is but one element – makes 'the dead come' to Germany; a country that, in the artists' view, is run by 'one of the most influential governments in Europe' (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2015a). By rendering its victims visible for a wider public, the artwork exposes the brutality of the EU border regime. This part of the artwork involved a group of the CPB's supporters but also members of the public, who not only appropriated the public square, but also the performance, to initiate new rituals of commemoration. The artwork provoked highly contrasting

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reactions among Members of Parliament, government ministers and commentators in the media, ranging from applause to indignation (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2015b). What are the political implications of such performances?

The arts literature has highlighted how performance art can draw attention to what would otherwise slip from view, and thereby interrupt routinized registers, sequences or rituals (Amoore and Hall 2010). To Rancière, this effect is political, inasmuch as he sees politics as a disruption of an order in the name of what is not seen by that order (2004). Performance art can play an important role in destabilizing the relational space in which political identities are configured, in that expressions of pleasure or displeasure can have equally disruptive effects on the iterative performances of, for instance, nationality or citizenship (Cull and Gritzner 2011; Fisher 2011). A performance is thereby not necessarily understood as limited to the stage, but can involve ‘any action that is framed, enacted, presented, highlighted, or “displayed”’ (Schechner 2013, 2). The analogy between performance art and politics seems pertinent in that both involve actors who perform and spectators who receive, evaluate and react to these actions (Reinelt and Rai 2015). Rancière sees performance art as emancipatory if it dismantles the Cartesian theatrical dichotomy of actor and spectator, both of whom participate in the mutually transforming process of an ever-changing world (2007, 2009). His work has drawn attention to moments when allocated roles – for instance the distinction between acting bodies on stage and the passivity of the voyeur in the audience, or between political representatives in charge of public life and citizens tending to their private matters – are being subverted or reversed. In such moments, Rancière suggests, innovative modes of public engagement and novel political subjects are created, however momentarily and partially. Drawing on the example of the CPB’s artwork, this article explores the analogy between theatre and politics further.

More specifically, I explore whether and how art performances like the CPB’s bring about novel ways of being political and relating to one another, thus new ways of acting as citizens. The analysis draws on and contributes to the growing literature on ‘acts of citizenship’ (Isin and Nielsen 2008). This perspective directs attention to the gap between the practices, discourses and technologies of power governing individuals and their rupture through emancipatory acts, focusing on the productive energy that lies within that gap (McNevin 2013, 199). Acts of citizenship are deeds through which actors and their actions irritate or subvert everyday routines or scripts, and thereby claim rights that have either not yet been formally granted, or that have been codified but cannot be adequately activated; actors thereby constitute themselves and others as rights claiming subjects (Isin 2012, 151).

Scholarly works in critical citizenship and border studies have examined claims articulated by refugees or illegalized travellers (Andrijasevic and Anderson 2009; Weber and Pickering 2011; Nyers and Rygiel 2012; McNevin 2013), refugee ‘supporters’ or ‘humanitarian activists’ (Malkki 2015; Hauschild 2016), and joint forms of collective activism (Nyers 2003; Rygiel 2014, 2016; Ataç et al. 2015; Ataç, Rygiel, and Stierl 2016; Stierl 2016). Several studies have explicitly focused on arts practices as a tool of mobilization in this area (Amoore and Hall 2010; McNevin 2010; Squire 2014; Hauschild 2016; Stierl 2016), and applied Rancière’s writings to migration studies (Nyers 2003; Edkins 2011, 2015; Wilcke and Lambert 2015; Stierl 2016). Previous research has also, albeit perhaps less critically, engaged with the CPB’s artwork (Hauschild 2016; Stierl 2016). While these analyses have offered important insights into political subjectivation processes in border struggles, Rancière’s concern with

the ways in which performances are enacted and their relevance to our understanding of the performativity of citizenship has so far received less consideration.

This article thus combines the research agenda of the acts of citizenship literature with reflections on emancipatory theatre; exploring the roles available to ‘actors’ and ‘spectators’ and the directionality of the message conveyed through activity-based art (Rancière 2007, 2009), I examine how the CPB’s performance subverts the ‘sites’ and ‘scales’ of citizenship (Isin 2012). The acts of citizenship literature’s focus on modifications of the boundaries of citizenship is amended with additional reflections on the intersubjective features of citizenship enactments. My analysis disentangles further how alternative modes of relating are not only activated through the political vision conveyed through an act, but also through the way it is performed. The analogy between activity-based art and acts of citizenship is helpful in this regard: a spectacle, just as political subjectivity, can be enacted such that it either ‘authoritatively’ conveys a set of preconfigured messages, or it allows a multi-layered intersubjective reality to unfold, whereby subaltern voices become audible.

Scholarship in this area has elaborated that acts of citizenship can contest key features of a status-based notion of citizenship, while at the same time strengthening the rules of membership associated with it in other respects (Isin 2014; Rygiel 2016). The framework thus offers a toolkit to unearth progressive ruptures of political registers, and also allows pointing to ways in which art or activism remains situated in its social environment, and is underpinned by and reproduces diverging rationalities and technologies of power. The spectrum of critical potentialities within each act of citizenship is of particular interest to this analysis. I suggest that the way in which an act is performed affects its subversive potential. More specifically, I argue that those parts of the artwork ‘The dead are coming’ which deviate from a traditional spectacle’s division of roles between ‘puppet-masters’ and ‘receptors’, most extensively subvert the foundational logics of citizenship, including the binary between citizen and non-citizen, the structural violence of borders and an orientalist imaginary. I develop this argument by outlining the main conceptual considerations that guided my analysis and discussing the acts of citizenship that I have identified throughout the performance.

### The ‘Centre for Political Beauty’

The CPB was established by political theorist Philipp Ruch and made its first public appearances in 2010. Varying numbers of individuals have been involved over the years, including a handful of ‘core members’ and about 20–30 volunteers per artwork. According to their self-description, the Centre is an ‘assault team’ that establishes ‘moral beauty, political poetry and human greatness’ (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2016). Ruch reasons that experiencing ‘moral action’ and ‘human magnanimity’ is stimulating and ‘unbelievably beautiful’ (Widman 2015a). The Centre’s work raises the question: ‘What would a state, turned into a Centre for Political Beauty, look like? What acts, decisions, deed or scenarios deserve the name political beauty?’ (Ruch 2012).

At the core the CPB’s ‘aggressive humanism’ is the struggle against human rights violations. Germany has a key role to play in this regard: ‘Who else if not the country of holocaust perpetrators is morally obliged to lead an offensive battle against genocide, human rights violations and unjust regimes?’ (Ruch 2013). Ruch’s political manifesto appeals to states like Germany to protect the most vulnerable, and to his fellow German citizens’ to

help and take care of those in need (2015). One of the malaises of our time, in his view, is that those ‘in pursuit of power and greatness’ are being demonized (Ruch 2015, 127). ‘In a country of political beauty, the members of parliament fighting for human rights are being held in the highest regard’ (2013). In Ruch’s understanding, human rights activists are ‘great souls’ of ‘exceptional moral beauty’ who elevate themselves above ‘unaffected’ ‘common souls’ through their actions (2013). The CPB’s work intends to offer a ‘forge of ideas, emotions and actions’ for states and individuals aspiring to such ‘beauty’, ‘greatness’ and ‘magnanimous choices’ (2015, 21). A slightly moralistic undertone and self-glorifying narrative thus accompanies Ruch’s calls to ‘do great things’ and ‘act in a humanitarian way’.

In recent years, the Centre has explicitly focused its work on refugee politics. In June 2015, when ‘The dead are coming’ was realized, border struggles had gained widespread visibility in Germany. Refugees had mobilized through a series of hunger strikes, marches and occupations that received substantial media coverage (Wilcke and Lambert 2015). The escalating military conflict in Syria and the expansion of Isis, the self-proclaimed ‘Islamic State in Iraq and Syria’, prompted increasing population movements, initially within the region, and subsequently also to Europe. The German government responded with accepting higher numbers of asylum seekers and a simultaneous tightening of immigration rules and procedures. The German public’s reactions too were highly polarized; while local authorities registered growing verbal and physical abuse directed at asylum shelters in some areas, an astonishing number of volunteers offered hands-on assistance in other localities.

The CPB adds a distinctive voice to this landscape, as its intention is to politicize those in between the two ‘camps’: the disengaged (Ruch 2015). The artists distance themselves from what they call the ‘niceness’ of many human rights advocates whose political strategies tend to be confined to petitions and press releases (Ruch 2013). To achieve greater resonance, they make use of performance art as a tool to stage parallel realities that draw participants into alternate virtual experiences, in other words: they show reality how it could be (Ruch 2015, 24). Alternative ways of doing things are thereby moved from the distant realms of imagination into the sphere of tangible social reality (Hauschild 2016). In their own account, the CPB engages ‘in the most innovative forms of political performance art – an expanded approach to theatre’, that presumes that ‘art must hurt, provoke and rise in revolt’ (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2016).

This article thus traces the means by which the collective seeks to fulfil these aspirations. I explore the tools with which the artwork seeks to politicize, particularly focusing on the formation of political subjectivities enabled through the performance. The analysis is based on the artists’ online documentation of their artwork, their publications and statements, as well as commentary in mainstream and social media. This material is complemented by participant observation and informal conversations with the artists. This investigation draws on a series of questions that I derive from the literature on acts of citizenship.

## Reconfiguring citizenship through acts

The acts of citizenship scholarship has turned the focus in citizenship debates from legally constituted subjects and their institutionally granted entitlements to how instituted forms of citizenship, including legal norms and moral codes, are challenged or subverted. An act of citizenship, by definition, ‘exercises a right that does not exist or a right that exists but which is enacted by a political subject that does not exist in the eyes of the law’

(Isin 2012, 13). Through such deeds, actors constitute themselves and others as bearers of rights. In this light, activity-based art, especially if it seeks to rupture disengagement, politicize others, and activate denied rights of non-citizens, contributes to the subtle ‘doing’ and ‘undoing’ of the social fabric of citizenship. Acts of citizenship themselves, however, are underpinned by diverging rationalities of power, and at times even reinforce instituted citizenship in one way or another (Isin 2014; Rygiel 2016). My analysis pays particular attention to the spectrum of potentialities inherent in each act, and to the ways in which citizenship enactments can enable or limit processes of political subjectivation.

To unpack distinct acts of citizenship and the spectrum of challenges they offer, Isin distinguishes four key features, namely (1) *events*, (2) *sites*, (3) *scales* and (4) the *durability* of the deeds that constitute actors as claimants of rights (2012). For the purposes of this analysis, I shall add an additional feature, (5) *modalities of enactment*.

The *event* ‘embodies its rupture effect’ and thereby reveals or discloses an act (Isin 2012, 131). An event accelerates the experience of those who witness it (*ibid.*). Its most relevant feature, however, is that it constitutes individuals as claimants of rights. In this case, the events in question are the multiple stages of the performance ‘The dead are coming.’

*Sites* of citizenship are not merely locations or places, but spaces of contestation or struggle around which ‘certain issues, interests, stakes as well as themes, concepts and objects assemble’ (Isin 2012, 133). In this instance, the site of contestation is the EU border regime. The border has been compared to a political stage as it constitutes a locus for the coercive hand of the state (e.g. Amoore and Hall 2010; Anderson, Sharma, and Wright 2012; Auchter 2012; Rygiel 2014). Its coercive features materialize in the physical constraint or violence that results from the modalities of border enforcement, thus the ways in which borders are controlled or policed. Furthermore, the act of drawing a line itself, and the legal and discursive justification of state borders, places people in asymmetric power relations and creates distinctions between nationality statuses (Anderson, Sharma, and Wright 2012). Political discourses and practices can contribute to disrupting and subverting, or to producing and reinforcing the spectrum of rituals that constitute the border as a site of citizenship. A variant of the discourse of liberal humanitarianism, as referenced by Philipp Ruch in his narration of the CPB’s mission (2012, 2013, 2015), appeals to nations and states to act as protectors of the human rights of the vulnerable. Scholarship in critical border studies has argued that this discursive understanding offers a critique of the violence of border controls, but sustains and normalizes the structural division resulting from the ongoing production of borders. Nyers, for instance, argues that conceiving of states as protectors of human rights reinforces the state’s claim to monopolize the subjects of protection on its territory, and thus further territorializes people’s relationship to space (2003, 1071). Anderson, Sharma, and Wright (2012) argue that the language of protection is problematic as it obliterates how vulnerability itself is the product of relations of dependency and subordination created by borders. In contrast to often more substantial nationality-based privileges, human rights guarantee only the most basic standards and only can provide a starting point for dismantling the structural inequalities of nationality-based citizenship. Critical border studies thus refer to solidarity among mobile/global commons as opposed to state subjects (Anderson, Sharma, and Wright 2012; Ataç, Rygiel, and Stierl 2016). Against this background, my analysis traces whether and how the CPB’s activity-based artwork problematizes the border as a site of citizenship, for example, if the performance contests modalities of border control and enforcement, or also the structural inequality upheld through their legal and discursive production.

The *scales* of an act of citizenship refer to the reach and scope of various actions that assemble an act (Isin 2012, 134). Scales include cities, empires, nations, states, federations, ethnicities, which, in Isin's view, are commonly constructed as 'containers', but that can become more fluid if seen as formed and reshaped through contestations and struggles (ibid.). Barbero's analysis of the EU's border regime, for instance, showed that discursive practices through which the West produces categories of an East, an Orient, continue to operate such that descriptions as backward, primitive or inferior serve to justify the fortification of the European border (2012, 758). Barbero gives evidence of explicit derogatory depictions of 'oriental others' that underpin rationalizations of fortress Europe, thus practices that keep the 'non-European other' out. My analysis is concerned with subtler discourses that uphold relations of subordination, dependency or patronage, which serve to justify Europe's charitable mission. Top-down modes of relating, for instance, configure refugees as objects of rescue. The CPB's appeals to 'help' and 'take care' of 'others in need', for instance, project relations between magnanimous saviours and objects of their humanitarian concern. Rather than constituting a positive doctrine, Said saw Orientalism as 'a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought', *a mapping of relations manifested in structural asymmetries* which have political implications (2003, 42). Said showed how Europe constituted itself as not only the puppet master, but a genuine creator, whose life-giving powers represent, animate, and constitute the Orient as otherwise silent object (2003, 57). For instance, colonial and postcolonial techniques of government rendered political subjectivity and rights conditional upon Western authorization (Isin 2015). The Oriental is offered a seat at the European table by virtue of their benevolent and charitable host who, as Said put it, 'never ever loses the upper hand' (2003, 7). Given that top-down concepts such as hospitality, magnanimity, charity and compassion have higher currency in the CPB's written appeals to the public than, for instance, more egalitarian notions such as solidarity, the question arises whether their performances too reproduce modes of relating that perpetuate the power asymmetries of a postcolonial gaze. Does the performance blur distinctions between European benefactors and non-European objects of rescue? Does the performance shine a light on the artists' own agency and 'human greatness', as they like to put it, or is there scope for other agents, most notably refugees, to execute acts of political beauty? Are refugees' rights enacted or bestowed upon them, thus constructed as reliant on external authorization? Thus, who acts as a citizen in the performance?

The *duration* of an act, its performative force, cannot be observed only during the performance, 'but must include its subsequent interpretation and description' (Isin 2012, 135). A key feature of an act of citizenship is its capacity to evoke a response (Isin and Nielsen 2008). Although the performances immediately involve only a relatively small circle of participants, and symbolic graves for refugees constitute fleeting experiences, the artwork also provokes a flurry of commentary. Processes of subjectivation can also be traced in these reactions.

An additional characteristic that I would like to draw attention to, the *modality of the enactment*, emerges from the physical reality and quality of the intervention itself, inasmuch as actors 'do things differently', in this particular case performing rituals differently in symbolically charged locations. Rancière emphasizes that the way in which – and by whom – actions are performed, but also the very manner in which individuals have a part, impacts on the process of subjectivation (2004, 12). Novel subjects emerge from the redistribution of traditional roles between those on stage and those in the audience, between actor and spectator, and by conceiving of art as immanently produced, as opposed to transcendent

systems expressing a prior body of knowledge. Emancipation, by Rancière's definition, is the 'blurring of the boundary between those who act and those who look' (2009, 19), the dissolution of the dichotomy between moving bodies on stage and the passivity of the voyeur in the audience. Key is that the artist does not resume the role of a schoolmaster transmitting their knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. The master's notion of transmission implies that the dramaturg would like the audience 'to see *this* thing, feel *that* feeling, understand *this* lesson of what they see, and get into *that* action in consequence of what they have seen, felt and understood' (Rancière 2007, 277). Instead, Rancière suggests, the artwork is to be 'the third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect' (2009, 15). His perspective invites further inspection of the CPB's self-ascribed 'expanded and most-innovative approach to theatre'. The questions arising are: Does the artist collective resume the role of a puppet-master? Can the audience, or the protagonists whose fate is narrated, leave an imprint on the artwork, or appropriate the course of action? In other words – does the engagement with the performance allow to experience the enactment of alternative forms of political subjectivity?

### Who acts in 'The dead are coming'?

The following section discusses four acts of citizenship that I identified in my analysis of 'The dead are coming'. Paying particular attention to the modality of its enactment, I trace how and to which degree the artwork challenges the border as a site of citizenship and whether the scales of citizenship are extended beyond current notions of who counts as a citizen.

The artwork was, in accordance with the CPB's usual procedures, preceded by extensive research and preparation. An artist from the Centre's 'planning department' travelled to Sicily and collected visual evidence of a cold storage room in Augusta, in which 17 bodies were lying wrapped in plastic bags and stacked in piles, with blood pooling underneath. The undertakers claimed they were overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the 'body count' (Jakob 2015), which has risen since the discontinuation of the EU's Mare Nostrum programme (Bendel 2015) and the displacement of migratory routes through the ever increasing fortification and externalization of EU borders (Weber and Pickering 2011, 27). As a result of such political choices, individuals are left to die, even though their death could be averted. Mbembe has coined the term necropolitics to highlight the political agency underpinning practices that allow rather than prevent the termination of lives (2003).

The artist collective reported that most individuals whose bodies appeared on the shore in Augusta had carried documents and could have been identified; nevertheless, it was not common practice to notify family members (personal conversation). Instead, the deceased were buried as 'unknown' in local cemeteries. The long duration and conditions of storage deviate from standards across the globe, but specifically violate Islamic rituals that require a timely inhumation. Such practices further deny non-European citizens the yet to be codified right to a decent burial (see also Rygiel 2014, 2016; Perl 2016), and families are deprived of their entitlement to learn about the death of their loved ones. Butler has argued that some deaths are not only poorly marked but, as in this instance, rendered unmarkable for those who would wish to mourn and bury their dead (2003, 23). The absence of a body 'invokes uncertainties about the truth, circumstances, and whereabouts of the dead person and fore-closes grieving' (Perl 2016, 196). The systematic lack of consideration and anonymization



of graves thus implies a disavowal of some deaths and renders those who remain nameless un-grievable (Butler 2003).

The CPB passed the documentary material on to a German newspaper that published the story on the day the public stages of the performance unfolded (Jakob 2015). Titled 'Was wir sehen müssen' ('What we need to see'), the article exposed undignified storage and burial practices and provided the relevant background information to the artwork. By making 'the dead come' into view in the public, this first act of citizenship problematizes the attribution of different grievability to bodies (see Stierl 2016). By enacting investigative and caring witnesses, the artists direct the public's gaze to high numbers of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea and bodies that remain unidentified. The act exposes the results of current necropolitical practice and disrupts the prevailing disengagement with it. This part of the performance involves elements of a role distribution in that the images that are projected turn attention to the way in which racialized distinctions between nationality statuses render some lives un-grievable. The first act draws attention to the 'grief privileges' and status inequalities produced by the border as a site of citizenship; it does not yet subvert the rulebook of a traditional spectacle, in that the acting subjects are the artists who convey their message to their audience, the German public.

In the second act, the artists committed to 'fulfilling the dream of the deceased' by enabling them to come to Germany, in the CPB's narrative one of the wealthiest and most powerful countries in Europe and the 'control centre of the border defence regime' (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2015a). The collective identified two 'unknown' deceased refugees from Syria, contacted their relatives, gained their families' permission to exhume their undignified graves, and transported the bodies across Europe. This process involved negotiations with various institutions in several countries, and revealed the vast amount of regulations that pose obstacles to crossing frontiers in Schengen Europe if non-European refugees are involved, even if they are no longer alive. The artists experienced an array of bureaucratic regulations that reproduce and maintain the distinction between European and non-European citizens. Eventually, and only after several near-failures of the endeavour, the dead arrived at their destination. The act de-individualizes border struggles in that it points to bureaucratic obstacles and thus invokes collective responsibility on the part of European politicians and citizens. The political subjectivity enacted here is one that uses the privilege of German citizenship and the rights of mobility legitimized through it to navigate through the obstacles of the EU border regime. The act disrupts the automatism of anonymization, 'undoes' the unknown grave, overrides the bureaucratic barriers and moves the victims from the periphery of Europe's vision to its centre. It thereby demonstrates how non-Europeans can become rights-bearers in Europe – however, only upon the loss of their lives, and when carried across the border by European citizens. By exhuming bodies and physically transgressing borders, this second act of citizenship not only lays bare but also subverts the multilayered way in which regulatory frameworks intertwine to sustain racialized distinctions even beyond human life. The act explicitly challenges limitations posed by border controls; it also blurs nationality distinctions, and thus problematizes the legal and discursive mechanisms that maintain the border as a site of citizenship. Making dead bodies 'come' to Germany, the performance enacts a contested right to mobility, albeit with the intent of restoring basic standards of human dignity, not necessarily in relation to the free movement of living beings. The acting roles available in this sequence of the performance remain confined to the artists themselves, who activate refugees' political subjectivity on

their behalf. The scenery thus carries faint traces of an orientalist imaginary, whereby the artists feature as puppet-masters and refugees remain at the receiving end of their charity.

In a third act of citizenship, the artist collective conducted a public burial to restore the deceased's dignity. The artists contacted cemeteries with the request to hold a funeral for two Syrian refugees, a man and a woman. A majority of cemeteries in Berlin declined arguing that they did not see themselves in a position to fulfil the criteria of the Islamic ritual (personal conversation). A Protestant bishop saw the ceremony as a desecration and made clear that no funeral would take place in any of the 40 sites that were under his jurisdiction. However, a director of one of those cemeteries decided not to obey her orders and allowed the man's funeral to take place in Berlin-Schöneberg, whilst the woman's burial took place at the Muslim cemetery in Berlin-Gatow. A local Imam performed the religious ritual, and each individual's story was told during the ceremony. The CPB announced that the deceased woman's husband had survived and safely arrived in Germany, where he applied for asylum. He was not able to attend the ceremony due to a highly contested regulation in German asylum law. The legal framework, which in recent months has been subject to ongoing negotiation, at the time obliged asylum seekers to permanently remain in the local area in which their asylum request is registered. The artists enabled him to follow the burial proceedings via an online live-stream. Invitations were sent to the Minister of the Interior, Thomas de Maizière, Chancellor Angela Merkel, and a series of government ministers with responsibility in relevant policy areas (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2015a). According to its self-understanding, the Centre acts as if it was a state in a parallel world (Ruch 2012, 230), implementing a 'humanitarian act' with such realistic features that a political representative could realize the vision served to them, by, for instance, attending the ceremony. Politicians are thus offered leading acting roles in this part of the performance. The chairs reserved for members of government, needless to say, remained empty. Beyond invoking collective responsibility, this third act specifically allocates *individual* accountability for current modalities of border enforcement to high-ranking politicians.

By organizing an act of public mourning, the artists make the 'dead come' to the German public in yet another way, redirecting the way in which memory is performed. Auchter reasons that remembering constitutes an intensely political activity, just as the act of naming has linguistic and discursive power in this context (2012, 21, 55). Executing a decent farewell ritual, the act restores the memorability of both refugees. Through the burial procedure, but also by putting the bodies in personalized tombs, a lasting site of remembrance is created. The deceased, the Centre reasoned, should receive the same kind of official ceremony that the government would organize if it had been German tourists who died on holiday in the Mediterranean. Staging an official ceremony, the act disrupts the binary logic of nationality-based citizenship. Stierl argues, drawing on Butler's work (2003), that such 'grief activism' constitutes a transformative practice in that it displaces citizenship as an identitarian arrangement of community and 'engenders alternative imaginaries of ways of being with one another' (Stierl 2016, 174). By telling each individual's story, the act recuperates the individuality of two people, who, qua their 'status' as non-European citizens, would otherwise remain relegated to a nameless crowd. Hints at the relatives' fate personalize the event and foster emotional engagement with the deceased as, for instance, a partner, or a parent, while formally preserving the relatives' anonymity in light of their pending asylum claim. The imagination of those who personally grieve their loss, as well as the performance of the religious ritual by the Imam, stretch the directionality of the political vision beyond

one put forward solely and authoritatively by the artist collective, and add the voices of those whose lives are affected. The scope of these acting roles, however, remains limited to enacting a part that has been strictly scripted by the CPB. Thus, although this stage of the performance projects images in which acts of political beauty are no longer exclusively executed by the artist collective, the Centre retains its role as a puppet master who pulls the strings. Refugee's rights and political subjectivity thereby remain constructed as derivative of and activated by European citizen's political agency, which insinuates the contours of an orientalist mapping of relations. However, especially the restoration and personalization of the grievability of two lives, as well as the allocation of accountability for the deaths of two 'non-citizens' to German political representatives redistribute roles currently prevalent in the global order, and thus extend the scales of citizenship.

The fourth act of citizenship reached out to an even wider public. The CPB positioned a building plan poster between the Parliament and the Chancellery, which announced that the German Interior Ministry and Frontex, one of the European agencies in charge of implementing the member states' border regime, were collaborating in the construction of a 'Memorial for the Unknown Refugee'. As instantiations of sentiments that are considered memorable, memorials are physical concretizations of a politics of memory (Auchter 2012, 18). Aesthetically not dissimilar to Eisenmann's Memorial to the 'Murdered Jews of Europe' near Parliament, the monument involved rows of gravestones and the inscription 'One day we will be the fleeing ones'. The inscription is suggestive of a role reversal, further deconstructing status-based distinctions. The CPB's website offered an animated video of the memorial for the 'victims of the military cordoning off of Europe' (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2015a), reminding of the military those lives which are currently not considered publicly memorable. Shortly before the burials took place, the Centre announced a funeral cortege to the site of the 'planned memorial' and circulated instructions for the creation of impromptu graves. About 8000 people signalled their participation on Facebook. Upon registering the procession, public authorities forbade the trespass in front of the Chancellery, the use of an excavator, as well as the involvement of actual corpses. The 5000 people who showed up to the 'March of the Determined' were largely 'German citizens', but included individuals from post-migration communities, all of whom brought shovels, flowers, candles and spades. As the procession came to a close near the building plan poster, the artists signalled their farewells. A few hundred of those who had taken part in the cortege, however, stormed onto the Square of the Republic, taking down the provisional fence that sealed off the lawn in front of Parliament. Despite several arrests for illegal trespassing onto the lawn, participants dug about 100 symbolic graves, which they decorated with flowers, candles and tributes to the 'unknown refugee' or statements such as 'fortresses fall'. This part of the performance was scripted only to the degree that the animated video and the instructions for pop-up graves had been circulated; it was, however, the participants themselves, rather than the artists, who 'got their hands dirty' to dig the memorial. They erected signs such as 'Borders kill' and 'Nobody is illegal'. Pointing to the structural violence of borders, the message of the artwork was extended to include a more explicit critique of the legal and discursive production of borders. Video and photographic evidence on social media documented a brief yet distinct manifestation of the 'Memorial for the Unknown Refugee' stretching across the Square of the Republic. For a short while, it was only by 'walking over dead bodies' that politicians could cross from Parliament to the Chancellery.

In this fourth act of citizenship, the CPB set the scene for citizens to creatively express their concern about the cruelty of the European border regime. Citizens, regardless of their nationality status, claimed their right to enter the square of the republic and use it for purposes of their own choosing. Within the limits of the instructions distributed by the artist collective, participants enacted citizens who take rituals of commemoration into their own hands. Apart from the use of the Christian symbol of the cross in the instructions, the traces of Orientalism are faintest in this part of the performance, as political subjectivity is not only enacted by those who are more likely to count as citizens in the German public. The involvement of a mixed public enabled the redistribution of roles that extended agency crucially beyond the artist collective, who were, in fact, hardly visible during this part of the performance. The creation of a memorial in front of the main loci of power in Germany, as envisaged in the animated video, asked for more than a one-off reconsideration of the enforcement of borders; it sought to inscribe gestures of solidarity into everyday lives. The memorial that was erected, as well as the fact that it was performed by hundreds of people, created, however fleetingly, a distinct physical materiality of commemoration. Stierl reasons that the creation of material sites of mourning enables the experience of togetherness beyond borders (2016, 184). This certainly applies to this fourth act of citizenship, in which the artist collective, and with them hundreds of people, extended the scales of citizenship by making the ‘dead come’ to be remembered on a central public square, alongside other victims of state power. The emancipatory expansion of acting bodies on stage, in this instance the Square of the Republic, also extended the contours of the political project advanced through the performance, inasmuch as a spectrum of the coercive features of the border as a site of citizenship were subverted.

Media reactions were highly polarized; journalists referred to the artwork as bad taste, impious and pornographic, whilst others spoke of a radical interpretation of Sophocles’ play *Antigone* (Diez 2015; Widman 2015b). The artwork received considerable acclaim and critical attention in Germany and beyond; the CPB linked to over 250 national and international news items on its website, referring to them as ‘Programmhefte’, programmes that a spectator would receive in a theatre (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2015b). Photographic and video evidence as well as instructions how to create a pop-up-memorial were shared via blogs, Facebook and Twitter, upon which spontaneous acts of solidarity erupted across Europe. For a few days, the hashtag #dietotenkommen became the most popular in Germany. Hundreds of graves in honour of unknown refugees were set up in over 70 German cities, but also in other countries, including Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, Latvia and in front of the British Parliament in London (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2015c). The durability of these acts of citizenship was enhanced through the considerable resonance and solidarity they evoked across borders. It was not only those immediately involved in the CPB’s activities who executed new forms of commemoration, but also those who took the art work beyond frontiers, establishing memorials to unknown refugees in public squares, on boulevards and next to existing monuments in cities across Europe. These reactions reflect the most evident emancipatory features in Rancière’s sense, in that this part of the performance disrupted the population’s role as an observer who ‘calmly examines the spectacle offered to her’ (2009, 4), inspiring spontaneous political action.

The CPB continued its work on ‘The dead are coming’ by offering ‘guided bus-tours’ to the cemeteries in Berlin. One of the tours was scheduled on the national ‘Volkstrauertag’ (‘People’s Mourning Day’), a public holiday that commemorates victims of armed conflicts

or oppression. The ‘tour-guides’ ring the doorbell at Parliament and ask for an appointment with the President, Norbert Lammert, to request the commemoration of victims of the European border regime in the public ceremony on ‘People’s Mourning Day’. The negotiation with the Parliament’s security guards, while led by the artists, also allows those who participate to contribute their own views. When the guards decline the requests, participants are taken to the cemeteries to honour the deceased. Such smaller performances extend the durability of the larger artwork by reiterating its central claims. During one of these tours, the artists and participants found themselves kettled for hours in front of Parliament, and criminal charges for trespassing into the fringe area were pressed against creative director Ruch. The collective’s appropriation of public spaces and rituals, such as squares, memorials or People’s Mourning Day, thus provokes recrimination by public authorities who thereby implicitly claim an exclusive right to the interpretation of public commemoration rituals. The German state’s prerogative, ironically, manifests itself here as a frontier security regime inasmuch as the Parliament invoked the fringe area to protect representatives from direct exposure to political protest. The CPB reacted with surprise that ‘the police could not distinguish between a guided art tour and a demonstration’, and pointed out that most of the kettled participants were art students, art historians or art critics (Kaul 2015). This example underlines, as per the creation of the public memorial, that the artists deliberately work with mainstream audiences whose participation allows them to orchestrate the ‘will of the people’ (Ruch in Widmann 2015a).

In those instances, in which ‘the people’ involve a mixed audience of ‘formal’ and ‘self-authorized’ citizens, the performance most notably extends the scales of citizenship and unfolds its subversive potential.

## Conclusions

To conclude, let me recap the unfolding processes of subjectivation that I identified in the performance of ‘The dead are coming’. These involved the artists themselves, participant audiences from a wider public and refugees who died in their attempt to enter the EU.

The artists seek to mobilize a conscious, empathetic citizenry that does not look away, subjecting themselves to disturbing experiences of undignified practices. They enact witnesses who share uncomfortable insights and expose indecency, make use of their status privilege as EU citizens to undo unknown graves, override bureaucratic barriers, cross state frontiers, restore dignity, conduct new rituals, and insert those into public routines. Acting as if they were the norm, the artist collective reveals and disrupts the cruelties of the actual norm. Rather than constructing refugee’s experiences as an outcome of their individual fate, as observed in other artistic interventions (Squire 2014), the Centre’s artwork politicizes border struggles in that it locates collective and individual responsibility with European states, politicians and citizens.

Those immediately participating in the artwork, and to a lesser degree also those engaging with its online documentation, experience rituals that facilitate emotional access to the indecencies resulting from the European border regime, partake in a ‘different way of doing things’, actively ‘get their hands dirty’ by establishing new procedures and artefacts of commemoration, and extend the circle of those who are honoured in public rituals. The artwork specifically contests practices of border enforcement in Europe. Highlighting the structural inequality that underpins the grievability of some lives, the artwork subverts the

privilege associated with a status-based notion of citizenship, and thus the structural division associated with borders. Those who participated in creating a memorial on the public square contributed a more explicit critique of the legal and discursive production of the border as a cite of citizenship. The widespread re-staging of rituals of commemoration further took the artwork across national borders and contributed to blurring the scales of the nation. In those stages of the performance, the Centre acted as an enabling facilitator rather than as a puppet master, foregrounding not their own, but other's capacity to enact political beauty. These parts of the artwork inspired spontaneous political action which most emphatically ruptured the public's role as passive observer of the atrocity at Europe's borders. Opening the stage to include wider audiences crucially extended the performance's emancipatory features, in that the redistribution of roles between actors and spectators multiplied the directionality and enhanced the political vision enacted through the artwork.

Finally, the title of the artwork itself and various stages of the performance allocate political subjectivity to those who have been rendered unworthy of basic rights by current border regimes: 'The dead are coming', zombielike, to the centre of Europe, to claim their rights. The title contributes to politicizing accountability, in that it evokes associations with ghosts who haunt the consciences of those who are complicit in their death. Auchter describes such images as the haunting of state power through ungrivable lives (2012, 43). As the artwork unfolds, previously unknown refugees' individuality becomes visible, their contested rights are activated, they receive a ceremony, a gravestone, and those who suffered a similar fate are commemorated visibly to all. Parts of the performance carry traces of an Orientalist mapping of relations, which finds expression in an imaginary that pits the strength of the West against the Orient's weakness, as perceived by the West (Said 2003, 45). Whether consciously or otherwise, those stages of the performance that have been strictly scripted by the CPB project images of oriental subjects who are reliant on their European saviours to activate their political subjectivity on their behalf. In these instances, rights are bestowed upon their bearers via the sublime and heroic actions of their benefactors. When the artwork is opened up to the authorship of a wider, not merely 'formally German' public to enact the political subjectivity of a citizenry, the performances most effectively overcomes such traces of Orientalism. The mode of the enactment thereby enables the possibility of experiencing and acting in solidarity together with, rather than simply on behalf of, those most affected by what is at stake. The CPB's later performances, for instance 'Flüchtlinge Fressen' in 2016, further extended the scales of citizenship in this regard, as it involved refugees in leading protagonist roles (Zentrum für Politische Schönheit 2016).

By adding a focus on the modalities of enacting citizenship to the analytical toolkit of the acts of citizenship literature, this article elaborates in greater detail on the intersubjective features of the performativity of citizenship. The contours of an act of citizenship, just as those of a spectacle, not only take shape through the message or political vision that is to be conveyed, but also through the way in which it is put into practice. The performance of an artwork, or an act of citizenship, most creatively facilitates novel processes of political subjectivation if it makes subaltern voices audible, disturbs 'the allocation of bodies to their rightful place' (Rancière 2009, 15), and opens up spaces for the experience of multilayered intersubjective realities. Acts of political beauty thus most extensively challenged instituted citizenship's orientalist anchoring, reversed status-based role allocations and subverted the structural violence of borders, when the performance created opportunities for the enactment of novel forms of political agency and solidarity.

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