

## Das Haus der 28 Türen, Bewegung Nurr, Berlin

The writing of this post has been interrupted and delayed several times. Its troubled itinerary is concerned with the relationship between space, memory and mobility embodied by "[Das Haus der 28 T - The House of the 28 Doors](#)" the installation by the art collective <a [Bewegung Nurr](#) which was first displayed in Berlin's Tempelhofer Feld from July 24th to August 10th 2014. Both the art project itself and its location have been deeply affected by conflicts and changes involving the presence of refugees in Berlin. Conceived as a multifunctional architecture project, "The House of the 28 Doors" was composed of 28 lined-up doors, representing the current EU countries and a flag with the twelve stars of the EU on a black background. The mobile relationship between the external structure and the inside space - hosting three video installations of the life stories of refugees living in Berlin - made manifest the interconnection of the EU borders enforcement with the refugees' status and lived experiences in Germany. [Nzar Saleh](#), [Sista Mimi](#) and [Bruno Watara's](#) personal accounts touched upon different periods and experiences, addressing itineraries of the Sahara Desert's crossing and the maritime passages to Europe, racism in Germany, life in refugee camps, and the struggles against the *Residenzpflicht*, a residency obligation restricting asylum seekers' freedom of movement. The video installation visualised what Nicholas De Genova has properly called the 'obscene supplement' of the 'border spectacle': «the large-scale recruitment of illegalized migrants as legally vulnerable, precarious, and thus tractable labour» ([De Genova, 2013, p. 3](#)), bringing to light the role played by the reifying language of exclusion in concealing the violent inclusion of migrants into a space of forced invisibility. "The House of the 28 Doors" questioned such a regime of in/visibility through a mobile and self-transforming space, pointing to the connections between the asylum regime and forms and practices of resistance. The art project was, on the one side, influenced by the hundreds of refugees who died off of Lampedusa island in October 2013, and, on the other, by the 'refugee strikes' launched in Germany in 2012 following similar protests in Austria, France and the Netherlands. By challenging the boundaries between art and activism, the art project allowed different uses of the space itself: while during the day people could enter the space and look at the video installations, in the late afternoon the space transformed itself in order to host film screenings, debates and theatre performances, revolving around social and political struggles taking place in Germany. The multiplicity of subjectivities involved, reflects the specificity of this art project based on a cooperation between [Bewegung Nurr](#), [borderline-europe](#) - a non-profit and independent association- and the [Kunstraum Kreuzberg](#) (Berlin). Moving through its inner and outer spaces, as well as attending to some of the events taking place there, I was particularly struck by the plurality of temporalities evoked by the interplay between the installation and the space surrounding it. Movements across European borders, migrants' deportation, refugees' narrations, resounded with the deep historical memories of Tempelhofer Feld, a large park and former Berlin airport. Rebuilt in the mid 30s by the Nazi regime to be the world's biggest terminal, it hosted the only [official concentration camp](#) established in Berlin, whereas in the post-war period it became an iconic place at the centre of the Berlin Airlift of 1948-49, a symbol of solidarity and freedom. After the 11th of August

2014 the “House of the 28 Doors” moved from Tempelhof Feld to Oranienplatz, the Kreuzberg's square, which has become the refugee movement's battleground since October 2012, when a camp was established in connection with the Refugee Protest March from Würzburg to Berlin. There it was rebuilt by the activists of the Berlin refugee movement and used as a location for meetings, information and events.

[Image by R. Sokol.](#)

During the night between the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 the artwork was completely destroyed by arson. Its fate does not simply embody a symbolical meaning. In recent years violent attacks on migrants and refugees have substantially increased. Whatever the specific dynamics of the arson are, it nevertheless demonstrates the role played by far-right and anti-immigrant movements, such as Pegida, as integral parts of the Border Spectacle's scene, working to «enhance the efficiency of the obscene inclusion of migrants as ‘illegal’ -and commonly, also racially branded- labour» (De Genova, 2013, p. 14).

[Image by Thomas Schröder](#)

On the other side, in the aftermath of the Summer 2015 “Refugee crisis”, the space of the Tempelhof Hangar has been at the centre of the much disputed plan by the German government to provide temporary shelter for refugees. Since the end of October 2015, roughly 2.500 refugees have landed there waiting for their asylum application to be processed and/or for more stable accommodation. It is, to say the least, paradoxical to see how a space celebrating the freedom of movements is constructed in a way, which turns actual refugee seekers into spectral presences, each compelled to live in just 2 square metres.

[Image by Bernd von Jutrczenka/dpa](#)