

Therefore, this film clearly takes the side of the Kurdish resistance and shows the stories of Kurdish men and women. It is important, however, to note that the film is neither against Turkey, nor against the people of Turkey, but it is against what it identifies as the centralised, minority-hostile, Turkish state.

Ali Çan is a journalist who had been politically active for many years, for example, by writing for the Kurdish newspaper Özgür *Politika*, and by being the chairperson for 'FEYKOM', which is the umbrella organisation for the Kurdish associations in Austria. As he was not allowed to film in Turkey, he had to work on the film from Vienna. Likewise, Tina Leisch is also a journalist and a political activist. Her first documentary, *Gangster Girls* (2008), received much acclaim at the Vienna Film Festival, as did her film *Roque Dalton, Let's Shoot the Night!*, which was invited to forty international film festivals. This latter film earned the prize for 'Best Documentary Film' at the Cinelasamericas Film Festival in Austin/Texas and at the El Ojo Cojo Film Festival in Madrid and because she is not Kurdish, she is allowed to enter Turkey.

The protagonists of *Only the Dead Return Home* also hail from Austria, as well as Switzerland, Germany and France. Like Çan, many politically-active Kurds in exile cannot enter Turkey. Hence, the concept of the film: the exiles gave Leisch objects, like a red cloth or a book, so that she could take them on a journey to Kurdistan. It is when she sets out to deliver a book from a Kurdish exiled scientist to the library of a women's shelter that she meets the mayor of Nusaybin, who becomes the main protagonist of the film. The film spans five years, and through objects and their journeys, many more stories are told. While the film originally had only a few protagonists, as Leisch meets people connected to the objects she brings from Europe, the number of people and stories portrayed increases exponentially.

On 9 January 2013, the Kurdish political activists Sakine Cansız, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Şaylemezgot were assassinated in the Kurdish Information Office near Gare du Nord, in Paris. Tina Leisch and Ali Çan document this incident up to the repatriation of the bodies to Kurdistan. In their hometown, back in Diyarbakir, many local Kurds take part in the funeral, which culminates in the film's dramatic finale. After all, for many politically active Kurds in exile, this is the only way to return home.

*Mehmet Emir and Verena Baldwin*

*Austrian Academy of Sciences Institute for Social Anthropology*

*People of Nowhere.* Dir. Lior Sperandeo. Prod.Lior Sperandeo. Inzima Publishing. 119 mns. 2013.

*People of Nowhere* is a short film of 1'59" by Israeli director Lior Sperandeo. Released in November 2015, it touches upon the issue of the Syrian refugees and their arrival on the island of Lesbos, Greece, north-east of the Aegean Sea. Situated only a few kilometres from Turkey, this location is relevant, as the island houses one of the

biggest and most problematic refugee camps in Europe, where many refugees embark on their sea passage towards Europe. Indeed, the purpose of the film is to document the journey Syrian refugees undertake along one of the most frequented escape routes of our times. As we today witness mass displacement all around the world (either through migratory flows and flight, or via diasporic experiences in general), efforts of this sort are greatly valuable from an anthropological perspective. In fact, the title of the film directly refers to the experiences of flight and exile, for apparently it interprets the word 'nowhere' from the perspective of 'no place', informed by the diasporic trajectory of the refugees.

This film is part of a wider series of productions connected by the title '*People of...*', and produced by Sperandeo. The series includes, for instance, *People of Senegal*, *People of Nepal*, *People of Mumbai*, *People of Falashmura* and *People of Drought*. It must not escape our attention, therefore, that the title of the film reviewed here lacks the contextualization that characterized the other titles. The director's website offers a few words of explanation, also found in newspaper articles and web pages referring to this film.

The film is constructed only from clips of images and a song sung in French, and has no dialogue. Thus, those who appear in the film do not speak, leaving the film without the refugees' own narratives or any contextualization of the refugee situation, a strategy that recapitulates the title's lack of contextualization. Even though flight and exile have become commonplace today, this strategy leaves the responsibility of obtaining reliable information solely with the viewer. From this perspective, the lack of the portrayed subjects' own narratives may ultimately trivialize the context of the refugee, ending in a 'spectacularization' of the refugees' suffering.

Importantly, many refugees from Syria are Palestinians who were already refugees before their flight, as the result of the so-called *Nakba* (the ongoing catastrophe) dating from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the 1967 Six-Day War. Most of the Palestinian refugees who had been living in Syria and are now seeking refuge again in Europe cannot return to either of their homelands. The director, however, in his other short film, *People of Falashmura*, sought to portray the 'return' of Ethiopian Jews to a territory now recognized as belonging to the State of Israel. Thus, I understand that *People of Nowhere's* lack of contextualization, especially in relation to the other films of the series, provokes a discursive 'evasion' of the specificities of flight and exile in the case in question, such as the Palestinian refugee issue and the related Israeli policies (which guarantees the return of some to the detriment of the possibility of return of others). In other words, the lack of first-hand refugee narratives gives rise to the danger of essentialization, restricting the viewer's access to the plurality of trajectories, identity expressions, motivations, experiences and strategies, among other relevant constituent points of today's diverse flows of refugees.

To conclude, I understand that this short film seeks to highlight the important (but tragic) question of refugees, especially when considering Europe as a place to be reached and the rejection often suffered by the refugees. However, it leaves a looming gap in terms of information and contextualization, and begs for more protagonism on the part of the refugees themselves, who are represented merely through the lens of their tragedies, and portrayed solely from the perspective of the director himself.

*Rafael Gustavo de Oliveira*

*Programa de Pós-Graduação em Antropologia – Universidade Federal do Paraná*

*Refugee Republic*. Dir. Jan Rothuizen, Martijn van Tol and Dirk Jan Visser. Prod. Bruno Felix for Submarine Channel. Col. 59 mns. English. 2014.

Oftentimes, documentaries are forced to either focus on one or more individual points of view to tell a story and inform viewers of a social reality, or to narrate the story of a social group to the detriment of individual narratives that become subsumed in favour of the larger one. So, how do we tell the story of a city, a country, a people, while at the same time not forgetting how the lives of the very people who compose those groups have their own uniqueness? This is a tightrope that is hard to walk, and in *Refugee Republic* we see a clever and innovative way of dealing with this dichotomy.

*Refugee Republic* tells, in few words, the story of Domiz Camp, a refugee camp in Iraq populated mainly by Kurdish refugees fleeing civil war in Syria. But *Refugee Republic* ends up being more than just a narrative about that camp, as it encloses a myriad of narratives and topics that shape the daily lives and routines of its inhabitants. Domiz Camp, as is the case with most refugee camps, was built around the idea that it would be a temporary location that would not have existed had it not been for external circumstances. Yet, quite often, refugee camps end up becoming permanent urban settlements, and people who thought about either returning or settling somewhere else, end up having to create a new life, and everything that it might entail, in that location. And it is this creation of meanings, trade routes, alliances, economy, and the relation of the refugees with international agencies and the Iraqi cities and villages close by that make up the richness of this documentary and the stories it tells.

For example, in the ‘Camp Money Route’ section, we learn about some of the many business arising in Domiz Camp and about the camp’s economic dynamics. But we also learn, through Shareef Sulaiman’s personal story, which brought him, his wife and four children from Tel Hamis in Syria to Iraq in order to escape war, how he created one of the most lucrative business in the area, employing twenty other refugees. Sulaiman’s story is one of escaping persecution and war, but it is also one of entrepreneurship. It is a story that informs us of how social relations are created on Domiz Camp, and how they help create and shape the richness of the camp.