

## Editorial

**Bjørn Arntsen** (UiT-The Arctic University of Norway)

**Alyssa Grossman** (University of Liverpool)

**Osmund E. B. Grøholt** (University of Bergen)

**Leonard Kamerling** (University of Alaska Fairbanks)

The four films in this issue take place in very different geographical and cultural arenas, but they are all connected by the common thread of what it means to inhabit a place and make it one's own. For some, such as the protagonists in Trond Waage's film, *A Peaceful Place* (French version titled *Un Abri Paisible*), this involves escaping as refugees from a war-torn region to a new, unfamiliar country. For others, like those in Matthew Lancit's film, *Flâneurs—Street Rambles*, this means wandering around the streets of Paris, connecting with local life by engaging with the contemporary practices and historical legacies of *flânerie*. In Mattijs van de Port's film, *Knots and Holes: An Essay Film on the Life of Nets*, the filmmaker explores material practices of 'world-making', intimating how nets and knots serve to literally and metaphorically give form and order to the spaces around us. Esme Andrews' film, *The Wireless Set*, shows pensioners on a remote Scottish island who strive to retain a sense of familiarity and belonging as both the climate and socio-cultural landscape around them whirl with changes.

## The Films

*A Peaceful Place / Un Abri Paisible*, by Trond Waage, 71 minutes

An extended family of refugees from the Central African Republic has fled to the Cameroonian town of Ngaoundéré. They have all experienced extreme violence before managing to escape across the border. In the film's opening scene, newborn Elias is seen having a bath and when the film ends, he has turned four. During this period, the filmmaker follows individual family members in their struggles to establish a new existence for themselves and the rest of the family. Making an income, establishing wedding alliances and balancing personal ambitions with responsibilities toward the rest of the family are the film's pivot points.

In this context, the protagonists' immigrant status must be hidden to avoid exploitation by locals or being captured and fined by the police. This means that acquiring proper Cameroonian identity papers becomes an important step toward a stable life. At the end

of the film, we learn that this family now sees the once unfamiliar surroundings of Ngaoudéré as their best option. Most importantly, in Cameroon there is peace.

While the protagonists had experienced extremely traumatising events during the war in the Central African Republic, the filmmaker gives them the confidence to discuss these experiences openly in the presence of the camera. This is a difficult issue, but here it is sensitively addressed through the filmmaker's deep familiarity with the cultural context and close relationships with the protagonists.

***Flâneurs - Street Rambles***, by Matthew Lancit 80 minutes

*Flâneurs* is a film that wanders, both through its subject matter and in its very composition. It is a personal and anthropological exploration of the figure of the *flâneur*, its significance in 19th century Paris and its legacies in the ordinary corners and thoroughfares of contemporary urban life. The film chronicles a suspended moment in Matthew Lancit's trajectory as he tries to find his way as a filmmaker in a country that is not his own, having recently become a father to a baby girl, Madeleine. As Lancit takes his camera around Paris during his daily outings with Madeleine, he films what he finds along the way—traffic, shops, street vendors, motorbikes, dogs, ambulances, tourists, rain, mist, snow, people fishing from the concrete banks of the Seine, crowds on the pavement celebrating a football match, a protest march down an avenue, a man playing piano on the street corner.

When Lancit stops to speak with passers-by, he asks them about their own impressions of what constitutes a *flâneur*, whether they would consider themselves to be one, how a *flâneur* might be different from a gawker, if the term is now obsolete. We hear about these individuals' occupations, their broken marriages, their life choices, their mundane errands, their philosophical inclinations, their poetry. We even witness three-month-old Madeleine responding to her father's questions about the joys and pains she has experienced during her life thus far. The voice and musings of the filmmaker are skilfully woven into those of the interlocutors, who contemplate the act of rambling with no specific destination, and ponder what it means when, as one pedestrian remarks, "You can find your own world on one street."

***Knots and Holes: An Essay Film on the Life of Nets***, by Mattijs van de Port, 73 minutes

Stemming from long-term fieldwork in Bahia, Brazil, this film poetically explores how nets are made and maintained and how they contribute toward structuring the world in which humans dwell. In other words, the film examines how the material form of the net "plays itself out in human modes of world-making." A net is not just an abstract concept used as a theoretical metaphor. Rather, like the net of a fisherman, it enables practices of capturing, accumulating, filtering and categorising. At the same time, these gridded structures and categories sometimes collapse or are resisted. "It only takes one fish to do something like this", one of the fishermen remarks, referring to a large hole in a fishing net through which many fish have escaped. As an associative parallel, young queer men break through gridded gendered norms by wearing weblike lace that "marks one body as penetrable". Crucially, the filmmaker is very much present in the film and refers, for instance, to his own sexuality and his use of filters on a web-based dating app.

As the director's voice-over explains, films "drag all of the world along with them", thus making it difficult to use this medium to conceptualise nets in a sanitised, coherent, theoretical manner. This idea is reflected in the net-like properties of the film itself, which is constructed as a meshwork of associations, leaping from knot to knot, connecting fishing nets, lace garments, and the internet. Presented in this way, the structure of the film is mesh-like rather than linear. It is probing and exploratory rather than authoritative or conclusive, asking its viewers to reflect on its powerful images and themes to create their own networks of connections and relations.

***The Wireless Set***, by Esme Andrews, 32 minutes

The people of Sanday, a community of about 500 residents in the northern Orkney Islands, Scotland, are acutely aware of the changing landscape of healthcare in their region. Ageing residents of this rural community find themselves more and more isolated from access to healthcare. "We used to have dentists visiting, optometrists visiting, chiropodists visiting. Not now," David Sinclair, one of the main characters in the film, tells us. "If I have to go to the dentist now, it would be difficult for me to get there." The medical offices are on another island, a boat trip away. "The amenities being withdrawn, it hits the pensioners worse. 'But you've got to change with the times,' they tell us."

*The Wireless Set* follows a summer in the lives of three elderly residents on one of Orkney's non-linked islands. Weather reports on the local radio station are brought into the film to frame daily life on the islands - the changing sea conditions, the rain and storms that are at the heart of life in the Orkneys, both nourishing and complicating the lives of local elders. The protagonists carefully make their way across roads and beaches, which become all the more hazardous when navigated with a zimmer-frame and cane. At home they talk with the filmmaker about life, their belief in God, and the new reality of shrinking access to healthcare. The changes in healthcare are global but the consequences are local and profound. The film explores these changes from the perspective of those most affected - the ageing residents of rural Sanday, who tell their stories with both cheer and resignation.