

Director's statement

History is written by the victors. In the 1990s, it seemed that the racism, ethno-nationalism and the rise of borders which emerged in the Yugoslav wars was a throwback to 19th century politics. In 2020, these forces are centrifugal and dominant, equally mysterious in their power and hold.

Our film, "Lebensraum | Living space" (2010) is an experimental documentary based on the 1992 wartime diary of the anthropologist Ger Duijzings, kept during his research in Yugoslavia. The diary charts the rapid disintegration of civilian life and multiculturalism under assault by militant media outlets, virulent nationalisms, culture war and paramilitary gangs. His diary is a unique account of everyday life during wartime, weaving his own story with the many stories of people he meets along the way. Over the course of the film, the community of "crypto-catholics" which Duijzings is studying disappears before his eyes as part of the ongoing ethnic unmixing. Yugoslav citizenship itself disappears as new nations are forged in violent conflict.

This engaged witnessing is re-performed by Duijzings himself who starts reading the diary in his office and then continues it while walking the streets of London. The various London landscapes he traverses speak of racist attacks, IRA and islamist bombs, and left-wing terrorism. This separation of the 1992 Yugoslav diary and London in 2008 creates a tension between epic narrative and staging, between real-time and the *longue durée* of history.

The film was shot in one take with seven cameras recording in continuous real-time. Edited to bring out the harmonies and dissonances between the various images and between the text of the diary and the streets of London. "Lebensraum | Living space" favours a multiplicity of voices and perspectives reminding us that the voice of the witness can also accrue into the voice of a mass, while transforming the private space of shame into a public space of solidarity.

This lost work completed in 2010 which has never been screened has been remastered in 2020 from the original tapes in an elegant 2K DCP presentation.

Rastko Novaković
August 2020