

# Performing Schengen: myths, rituals and the making of European territoriality beyond Europe

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**Abstract.** Myth-making has historically been an essential component of the modern state's quest for territorial control and legitimacy. As a *sui generis* post-national political entity in search for identity and recognition, the European Union (EU) seems to mimicking its more established national counterpart. By formulating and reproducing a narrative that hails Europe's border control regime ('Schengen') as a success story of European integration and by deploying evocative imagery at Europe's common borders, the EU is in fact trying to establish itself as an integral part of the European political landscape. This article argues that what we are witnessing today in Europe is indeed the emergence of the 'myth of Schengen'; however, the regime's *mythopoiesis* goes beyond the EU's official narrative and symbolic representations. To capture the full range of actors, locations and activities involved in the establishment and reproduction of this post-national myth, it is necessary to shift the attention to the performative dimension of this process. To support this argument, the article relies on the insights of anthropological and sociological works that have emphasised the role of rituality and performativity in constituting social structures and identities. These insights are then applied to examine the rituals and performances characterising four cases of 'unofficial' Schengen myth-making beyond Europe: a hotel in Beijing, street kids in Kinshasa, a British music band, and a group of Eastern European artists.

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## Introduction: celebrating the myth of Schengen

In June 2005, delegates from the European Union (EU) member states and the European Commission gathered in Luxembourg to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Schengen agreements, the cornerstone of the policy regime that today regulates Europe's free travel area. During this event, Luc Frieden, then

President of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council, proudly proclaimed that Schengen had come to epitomise ‘freedom, security, and European success’.<sup>1</sup> The choice of these terms is not casual. ‘Freedom’, ‘security’ and ‘European success’ are three of the recurring themes in the official narrative about the Schengen regime articulated by EU officials in public speeches and official documents.

In this narrative, ‘freedom’ is associated with the regime’s stated objective of allowing citizens to travel across the continent without the hassle of checks at internal borders. This freedom, so we are told, is inextricably linked to the provision of greater ‘security’. Increased security is necessary in order to compensate for the growing threats that are alleged to derive from the abolition of border controls within Europe. EU officials have been eager to present this reformulation of the nexus between freedom and security as one of the most significant developments in European politics in recent times. They point to the fact that this initiative has accomplished what for a long time the EU has aspired to, namely the creation of a ‘Europe without frontiers’. From this perspective, Schengen has therefore been a story of successful European integration. What renders it even more remarkable is the fact that it has been achieved in a politically sensitive domain such as border control.

The official EU narrative depicting Schengen in terms of freedom, security and European success has been accompanied by a set of evocative symbolic gestures and imagery aimed at supporting this vision of the regime. With regards to freedom of movement, the abolition of borders has been celebrated with the public demolition of border posts, hand-shaking between leaders and the hugging of citizens of previously separated countries. All these acts were well documented by TV cameras and cheering crowds. To link Schengen more closely with the EU project, EU flags and signs have been plastered along the now common European borders. With regards to security, a wide array of surveillance technologies such as infrared cameras and electric barbed fences has been installed in ‘hot’ stretches of the external border (especially in Eastern Europe and along the Mediterranean). The deployment of these technologies is meant not only to improve the control of borders, but also to project the authority of the EU both within and beyond the European territory. Finally, in addition to the ceremony for the 20th anniversary mentioned above, the celebration of Schengen’s achievements has included the erection of a commemorative monument, evocatively located in the same Luxembourg village where the regime’s founding agreement was originally signed.

As the EU officials who are time and again rehearsing it would candidly confess, the official narrative about Schengen currently circulating in Europe is part of a larger coordinated campaign on the part of the EU to legitimise the political project that this supranational entity represents *vis-à-vis* a growingly sceptical popular audience and to justify its further expansion.<sup>2</sup> In these efforts, EU officials have clearly borrowed some of the techniques and practices that have characterised

<sup>1</sup> Luxembourg Presidency, ‘Twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Schengen Agreements’, *Press Release* (2 June 2005).

<sup>2</sup> See C. Shore, *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); and Tobias Theiler, *Political Symbolism and European Integration* (Manchester University Press, 2005). Some classic examples of what in EU jargon is called the Union’s ‘cultural polity’ include the creation of the European passport, flag and anthem.

the construction of the modern nation-state.<sup>3</sup> This is especially evident in the epic tone and colourful imagery defining their stories about Schengen. These stories call to mind ideas of struggle and perseverance, righteousness and compromise, ingenuity and fate, all supposedly describing the journey towards today's success and the character of those who made it possible. But it is also apparent in the celebrations performed in evocative places, in the construction of commemorative monuments, and in the ubiquity of signs representing a common identity and purpose.

Political scientists and historians have recognised that this combination of narratives and symbols constitutes the foundations of the modern state's myth-making since the emergence of this political-territorial arrangement in the 17th century.<sup>4</sup> As has occurred in other realms (for example, religion), these practices have in fact helped the state become not just the *de facto* dominant political institution in the modern world (a status achieved thanks to a large extent by 'material' events such as wars) but also a kind of 'supernatural' entity treated with both deference and veneration by its subjects. Over the centuries, political entrepreneurs have played an active role in this mythopoietic process by reformulating, if not outright 'inventing', some of the stories and symbols that have come to define a state's identity.

Evidence supports the hypothesis that something similar is occurring with the post-national territorial project that the Schengen regime embodies. A case, therefore, could be made that what is occurring today in the context of the EU is an attempt to establish Schengen as a 'myth'. The argument advanced in this article, however, is that this hypothesis about the making of the 'myth of Schengen', while well founded, is too narrow to capture the complex nature and implications of the process leading to the creation of Europe's new territorial regime. The existing conceptualisation of Schengen's myth-making, borrowed from the state-building experience, entails a formalist, static, and essentialist notion of this process. It is based on the assumption (shared by most EU officials) that myths are narratives supported by a pre-arranged set of symbols that can be deployed at will to persuade a rather passive audience.

To obtain a more nuanced understanding of its meaning and implications, the attention should be shifted away from the discursive towards the practical dimension of Schengen's mythopoiesis. The central concept in this practical approach to myth-making is that of *ritual*.<sup>5</sup> In general terms, rituals consist of 'symbolic behaviour that is socially standardized and repetitive'.<sup>6</sup> Rituals are not just spontaneous acts; they are formulaic and dramatic performances that involve

<sup>3</sup> A. D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); Christopher Flood, *Political Myth* (London: Routledge 2002); Lance W. Bennett, 'Myth, Ritual, and Political Control', *Journal of Communication*, 30:4 (1980), pp. 166–79; H. Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: MacMillan, 1972); see also G. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (New York: AMS Press, 1975) and Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946).

<sup>5</sup> On rituals, see Bobby C. Alexander, 'Ritual and Current Studies of ritual: overview', in Steven D. Glazer (ed.), *Anthropology of Religion: a Handbook* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1997); Steven Lukes, 'Political Ritual and Social Integration', *Sociology*, 9:2 (1975), pp. 289–308; Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion: an introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), ch. 10. On political rituals, see David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, p. 8.

actors and an audience.<sup>7</sup> They involve symbolic communication and are typically enacted in places and times that have themselves symbolic meaning. The added value of placing rituals at the centre of the analysis is that this move can highlight aspects of the myth-making process that the sole focus on symbols and narrative obscures. More specifically, a ritualist approach foregrounds how mythopoiesis is not restricted to what is officially sanctioned in the official realm of politics, to what is consciously planned, to policy-makers, practitioners and experts, to a given population or territory, or to a one-off event such as the ribbon cutting or the building of a monument. Instead, political myth-making is an ongoing process involving an array of actors who interact both inside and outside the official realm of politics and whose activities reinforce and, in some circumstances, challenge a myth's very foundations.

The literature on myth in Political Science recognises that a mythopoietic story can include an account of a ritual and that myths can be at the heart of rituals.<sup>8</sup> Yet most authors tend to consider rituals as evocative of myths, not productive of them, and thereby secondary to their analysis. To build a ritualist approach to studying the case of Schengen's myth-making, this article therefore looks beyond the discipline of Political Science and explores the insights of Anthropology, where the concept of rituals and its application to the study of myth has a long pedigree.<sup>9</sup> It also draws from recent scholarship in Sociology that has emphasised a key aspect of ritualist approaches, namely its performative dimension.<sup>10</sup> It then applies a ritualist approach to examine four cases of 'unofficial' Schengen myth-making beyond Europe: a hotel in Beijing, street kids in Kinshasa, a British music band, and a group of Eastern European artists. In concluding, the article will consider some of the implications of a ritualist argument for the EU-led project of creating a single European space across the continent, and whether there is an actual distinction between the 'real' Schengen and its mythical representations.

### **Myths, rituals and the study of world politics**

Political Scientists agree that political myths are ubiquitous, even in modern societies.<sup>11</sup> However, what precisely distinguishes a political myth from other types of mythical narratives is a source of contention. For some commentators, a myth is 'political' when its subject matter is politics, as opposed to, say, religion.<sup>12</sup> In practice, it is often difficult to establish what is political and what is not. In recognition of this ambiguity, some authors adopt a broad definition of political myth. For Bottici, it is 'work on a common narrative by which the members of a social group (or society) provide significance to their political experience and

<sup>7</sup> Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion*, p. 151; Steven Lukes, 'Political Ritual and Social Integration', p. 290.

<sup>8</sup> Flood, *Political Myth*, pp. 184, 187.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Alan Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, p. 132.

<sup>12</sup> Tudor, *Political Myth*, p. 138.

deeds'.<sup>13</sup> This formulation covers all narratives shared by a group that aims at addressing the political conditions in which this group functions.

Most authors, however, adopt a narrower interpretation of political myth. A popular approach is to associate this concept with ideology. According to Flood, modern political myth is an '*ideologically marked* narrative which purports to give a true account of past, present or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group'.<sup>14</sup> The reference to ideology is warranted because its main social and political functions (reflection and validation of relationships among social groups, maintenance or imposition of social and political hierarchical domination by one group, sustenance of balance among groups, resistance to hegemony) are believed to be analogous to those of myth in modern societies.<sup>15</sup> The correspondences between political myth and ideology are particularly apparent in the case of nationalism.<sup>16</sup> It is in fact through myths and their symbolic enactments (for example, flags, anthems, commemorations) that the shared experience of belonging to a common national enterprise is most powerfully represented and that 'will of the people' is most easily roused and directed.<sup>17</sup>

As for myth in general, scholars of political myth have tried to account for the origins of this phenomenon in different ways. Some authors have grounded myth in the social and political purposes it performs for a group. From this perspective, political myths represent mental maps for individuals to make sense of the world surrounding them,<sup>18</sup> provide practical guidance in addressing relevant problems,<sup>19</sup> and elicit powerful emotional responses through its narrative form and dramatic structure, grandiose content, the amplification effect of collective participation.<sup>20</sup> They also contribute to the construction of a community by drawing its members together in a shared web of meanings. In this way, myths can reinforce existing institutions and the position of some members of the community, but also sanction social segmentation and political hierarchies, and even embolden oppositional groups.<sup>21</sup>

These social and political functions provide the rationale for the existence of political myths in the contemporary world. Bottici, for example, notes that political myth is still central in modern societies because 'their complexity, the rapid change they have undergone by transcending the individual's space of experience have rendered more pressing *the need for* a symbolic mediation of political experience'.<sup>22</sup> Most political scientists, however, eschew purely structuralist explanations of myth<sup>23</sup> and point to the facilitating role that political entrepreneurs play in the

<sup>13</sup> Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Flood, *Political Myth*, p. 44; emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> A. D. Smith, *National Identity*; Anthony D. Smith, 'Will and Sacrifice: Images of National Identity', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30:3 (2001), pp. 571–84.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *National Identity*.

<sup>18</sup> Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (University of Illinois Press, 1985), pp. 225–6.

<sup>19</sup> Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*; Tudor, *Political Myth*, p. 123.

<sup>20</sup> Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*; Flood, *Political Myth*, p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> Flood, *Political Myth*, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Bottici, *A philosophy of Political Myth*, p. 132; emphasis added.

<sup>23</sup> The anthropologist Malinowski is one of the major exponents of this structural-functionalist approach to myth-making. In his view, the 'indispensable' function that myth fulfils is that 'it expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of rituals and contains practical rules for the guidance of man' (1974), p. 101.

myth-making process. The argument elaborated by Cassirer in *The Myth of the State* (1946) is on one of the classic examples of this ‘intentionalist approach’ to the study of myth.<sup>24</sup> In this work, political myths are considered artificial constructs fabricated by cunning artisans who make use of ‘new techniques of power’ such as the magical use of words, rituals, and prophecies.<sup>25</sup> Other political scientists, while agreeing that myth is always intended to influence beliefs and actions, have nonetheless warned that the distortion that mythical narratives might create are not necessarily intentional.<sup>26</sup>

An alternative to functionalist approaches to the study of myth-making (both in its structural and intentionalist versions) is represented by arguments that have explored the relation between myths and rituals. This line of inquiry has been developed mainly in Anthropology, and so far it has received limited attention in Political Science. Anthropologists have observed how, in both traditional and modern societies, mythical narratives and rituals such as attending mass or praying are two constitutive components of religious practice. The two phenomena also perform similar psychological, social and political functions for individuals and groups. Like myths, rituals channel and express emotions, guide and reinforce forms of behaviour, support or subvert the *status quo*, restore harmony, and bring about change.<sup>27</sup> Despite these similarities, the exact relationship between myth and ritual is a matter of controversy. In the scholarly literature, the two concepts tend to be treated separately, or to be linked only marginally.<sup>28</sup> Some of the authors who do consider their relationship as meaningful have stressed how a mythical narrative precedes and shapes the myth’s practical instantiations embodied in rituals.<sup>29</sup> Others have challenged this discursive approach to myth-making and adopted ideas elaborated by what in Anthropology is known as the ‘myth-ritualist’ or ‘myths and ritual’ theory.<sup>30</sup> The theory’s central claim is that myth does not stand by itself but is tied to ritual. William Robertson Smith, one of the early proponents of the theory, criticised the ‘modern habit [. . .] to look at religion from the side of belief rather than practice’.<sup>31</sup> In the attempt to counter the intellectualist bias of mainstream literature, authors working in the myth-ritualist tradition have argued that myths and their underlying narratives are dependent on pre-existing rituals. While myth-ritualist scholars differ on the specific features and trajectory

<sup>24</sup> Flood, *Political Myth*, p. 56.

<sup>25</sup> Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, p. 155.

<sup>26</sup> Tudor, *Political Myth*, p. 123.

<sup>27</sup> Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion: an introduction*, p. 151; Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, p. 14; Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory*, pp. 12–3.

<sup>29</sup> The approach to the myth-ritual relation positing the primacy of narrative in the constitution of myth builds on the ‘intellectualist’ tradition in religious studies (Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion: an introduction*, p. 157). The main representative of this tradition is the anthropologist Tylor, who claimed that religion is a means to explain the universe. Intellectualists regarding rituals include historian of religion Eliade (rituals as enactment of myths) and anthropologist Horton (myths and rituals as explanatory devices).

<sup>30</sup> On the myth-ritualist theory, see Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory*, Richard F. Hardin, ‘“Ritual” in recent criticism: the Elusive sense of Community’, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 98 (1983), pp. 846–62; Robert Ackernman, *The Myth and Ritual School* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991); for a critique see H. S. Versnel, ‘What’s Sauce for the Gosse is Sauce for the Gander: Myth and Ritual, Old and New’, in Edmund Lowell (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). Some of the most influential representatives of this tradition include W. Robertson-Smith, James Frazer, Jane Ellen Harrison, and S. H. Hooke.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory*, p. 3.

characterising the relationship between the two phenomena, they nonetheless agree that myth is an explanation of the ritual, not of the world, as discursive approaches to myth contend.<sup>32</sup> According to the ‘primacy of ritual’ hypothesis, ‘every myth is derived from a particular ritual and that the syntagmatic quality of myth is a reproduction of the succession of ritual act’.<sup>33</sup> One of the implications of this conceptualisation of the ritual-myth nexus is that when rituals change, myths should change too. Over time, however, myths can take up a life of their own, and therefore they might not be as responsive to variations in rituals as they were in their formative period.

The added value of the myth-ritualist theory is that it highlights the relationship between belief and practice, narrative and action, the parallels between myth and other cultural phenomena like science and literature, aspects that are often overlooked.<sup>34</sup> Conceptualised in this fashion, the myth-ritualist school has intriguing parallels with the body of literature in the social sciences and humanities that have emphasised the role of practices in constituting social identities and structures.<sup>35</sup> This literature has criticised mainstream materialist and rationalist approaches for their reliance on essentialist notions of reality and knowledge. The most famous and influential formulation of this practice-oriented approach to social inquiry is represented by Judith Butler’s work on gender. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler’s argument is that gender is not an essence as mainstream sociological literature suggests, but rather a set of acts that produce the effect of a coherent substance and conceal gender’s lack of a stable foundation.<sup>36</sup> Women and men learn to perform the sedimented forms of gendered social practices that become so routinised as to appear natural. Gender is therefore not something that one has, but rather something that one does. But instead of a singular moment of constitution or invention that brings subjects into being, gender is based on a process of recitation and repetition that is constrained by cultural and historical practices, although not completely determined by them.<sup>37</sup> It is ‘the stylized repetition of acts through time’<sup>38</sup> that sustains the idea that biological sex precedes gender.

This line of argument does not imply that one can choose to take on a particular gender at will. Performativity implies a kind of compulsory repetition of those norms through which a subject is constituted. These reiterations of norms ‘precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s “will” or “choice”’.<sup>39</sup> Performatively, there is no

<sup>32</sup> While discursive approaches to the relation between myth and ritual are based on the intellectualist tradition in religious studies (cf. fn. 29), the myth-ritualist theory can be traced to the contending ‘symbolist’ tradition (represented, among others, by authors such as Clifford Geertz and Maurice Bloch). From this perspective, the form a ritual takes and the belief it expresses are effective because they are also making statements about (‘symbolize’) and mirror society. On the debate between intellectualists and symbolists, see Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religion: an Introduction*, p. 157.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory*, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> T. R. Schatzki, Cetina K. Knorr and E. von Savigny (eds), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 145.

<sup>37</sup> Lloyd Moya, ‘Performativity, Parody, Politics’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16:2 (1999), p. 197.

<sup>38</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 141.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24. This ‘unreflective’ dimension is what distinguishes everyday ritual and theatrical performances. A ritual performance is not just the repetition of a received script. Individuals in a

subject that precedes or enacts the repetition of norms. The subject is the effect of their compulsory repetition.<sup>40</sup> Performativity is always a recitation of conventions that have already attained meaning or standard usage in a legitimate discourse. It is a process of re-signification, not signification.

While reiteration in performativity is compulsory, this does not imply that there is no room for agency and change. This possibility lies with resignification, that is, the reworking of the discourse through which subject effects are produced. As Butler explains it, the site for social and political change within the performance of identity lies in the displacement of dominant discourses, namely a 'slippage' within the process of repetition.<sup>41</sup> In *Gender Trouble*, the displacement of dominant discourses remains accidental and unintentional. Change stems from a spontaneous emergence of that which is repressed by dominant discourses (for example, non bi-modal sexuality).<sup>42</sup> However, a performative approach does not preclude the possibility that change can occur as the consequence of the purposeful action of political activists, even though they might not have complete control over the content and trajectory of the emerging new discourse.

Originally developed for the study of gender, performative approaches have recently expanded to other social science fields.<sup>43</sup> Although only marginally, the concept of performativity has also been employed in the discipline of International Relations (IR).<sup>44</sup> The area where performativity in IR has been more commonly used is in the study of foreign policy. One of the most elaborate applications of this notion is David Campbell's critical analysis of American foreign policy.<sup>45</sup> In reworking conventional understandings of this subject, Campbell uses Judith Butler's notion of performativity to distinguish his work from other accounts of foreign policy that take for granted the existence of the state and see foreign policy merely as state's actions. As Butler does in the case of gender, Campbell rejects efforts to link the performative constitution of identity with some pre-given subject, such as state officials. According to Campbell, US foreign policy is not simply the response of a pre-given subject, to its environment; instead 'as a subject of world politics the US is (just) an unstable effect of power,

ritual are not 'acting' but 'enacting'. Ritual is 'a mode of action taken by real and familiar people to affect the lives of other real and familiar people. Participants in ritual might be "acting", but they are not necessarily "just pretending". They are enacting, which contradicts neither the notion of belief nor the practice of theatrical acting' (Alexander, 'Ritual and Current Studies of ritual: overview', p. 154).

<sup>40</sup> Moya, 'Performativity, Parody, Politics', p. 201.

<sup>41</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> L. Nelson, 'Bodies (and spaces) do matter: the limits of performativity', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 6:4 (1999), p. 338.

<sup>43</sup> Notions of performativity have been used to study – *inter alia* – human geography (N. Gregson, G. Rose, 'Taking Butler elsewhere: performativities, spatialities and subjectivities', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18:4 (2000), pp. 433–52), cultural geography (Catherine Nash, 'Performativity in practice: some recent work in cultural geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 24:4 (2000), pp. 653–64), and citizenship (M. Joseph, *Nomadic identities: the performance of citizenship*, Minneapolis (MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Cynthia Weber, 'Performative states', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 27 (1998), pp. 77–97; Roxanne Doty, *Imperial Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Richard K. Ashley, 'Foreign Policy as Political Performance', *International Studies Notes, mimeo* (1988); R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, *Writing Security*, p. 208.



reproduced in the “reiterated acting” that “repeats and mimes” the discursive gestures of power, that is, the modes of representation and techniques of differentiation that constitute Foreign Policy’.<sup>46</sup> US subjectivity is affected through state representational practices that serve to align various other practices and diverse domains. These practices in turn constitute an imagined community, and bring into being an inside and an outside, a domestic and a foreign.<sup>47</sup> Foreign Policy is thus retheorised as one of the boundary-producing practices through which a country is performatively reproduced as a subject of global political life.

Although going beyond static notions of social identity and structures, Campbell and most IR scholars who have adopted a performative approach still use the state as main term of reference and focus on the official language of politics as the favourite expressive modality through which its performances are carried out. To compensate for this limited view of performativity it is useful to look at alternative forms of performing the political explored by IR authors who have addressed the ‘aesthetic’ dimension of world politics.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to ‘mimetic’ approaches that try to mirror reality, an aesthetic approach ‘assumes that there is always a gap between a form of representation and what is represented therewith’.<sup>49</sup> An aesthetic perspective on politics challenges taken for granted notions ‘by allowing us to see what may be obvious but has not been noted before [...]’.<sup>50</sup> This perspective also questions the traditional methodologies used in the discipline. The sources of knowledge used to study world politics are not just diplomatic documents, statistical data, political speeches, academic treatises etc., but also other ‘unofficial’ objects and activities. Art is one of these alternative forms of aesthetic expression analysed in the literature. When art is considered in the study of world politics, it is not just in its ‘high’ versions. Docker, for instance, suggests that significant critical potential is present in popular culture, since it challenges the existing unidimensional representation of reason in the public sphere.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the subject of artistic performance is not necessarily the exceptional and outstanding, but also the banal and the routinary.<sup>52</sup>

The literature on performativity in Sociology and International Relations shares with the myth-ritualist theory the emphasis on the practical and the symbolic in its accounts of social reality. It also offers valuable theoretical elaborations on sociological themes not fully explored in the myth-ritual theory literature, such as the role of agency in ritualised collective action, the meaning and implications of

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Works that have articulated aesthetic themes in IR include Roland Bleiker (ed.), ‘Poetic World Politics’, *Alternatives*, 25:3 (2000); Roland Bleiker, ‘Painting Politics’, *Social Alternatives*, 20:4 (2000); Tracey Seeley (ed.), ‘Literature and Peace’, *Peace Review*, 13:2 (2001); Christine Sylvester, ‘(Sur)Real Internationalisms: Émigrés, Natives Sons, and Ethical War Creations’, *Alternatives*, 24:2 (1999), pp. 219–47.

<sup>49</sup> Roland Bleiker, ‘The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30:3 (2001), p. 514.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 527.

<sup>51</sup> John Docker, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); see also Bleiker, *The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory*, p. 527.

<sup>52</sup> A similar point has been raised in works on political myth and rituals. For Edelman, myths are a facet of everyday life, not the exception, and thus we should not look for the mythical only in sites of the extraordinary (for example, parades; Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, p. 226). Some routine action can also be thought of as ritual (for example, going to work; Quakers call this action the ‘sacrament of the everyday’; Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, p. 10).

reiterated and standardised performances, and the relationship between rituality and social order. These elaborations render more plausible the grafting of the myth-ritualist theory from the religious to the political realm. If complemented with the insights of performative approaches in Sociology and IR, the myth-ritualist theory can therefore provide the foundations of a promising alternative analytical framework to study contemporary political myths and their evolution. In the remainder of this article, the goal is to assess the potential of this ritualist approach to account for Schengen's mythopoiesis and its empirical manifestations.

### Exploring the rituals of Schengen

The rituals constituting the Schengen myth can take different forms, depending on their internal dynamics, the location where they take place, the actors involved, and the type of expressive medium through which they are reproduced. Examples of everyday rituals regarding Schengen include border crossings at Europe's external frontiers, the movement of individuals across the continent, and visa applications at EU embassies; we could also consider as part of this category the 'rites of passage' represented by the negotiations among existing members over the issue of Schengen enlargement and the ongoing evaluation of candidate countries. These rituals do not represent, however, the entire spectrum of practical enactments constituting the emerging myth of Schengen. Even if not staged and choreographed by EU officials, as in the case of celebrations at Europe's frontiers or in the building of commemorative monuments, these activities are still too closely related to the official EU narrative. A performative approach applied to the study of territoriality suggests that it is necessary to look at alternative, 'unofficial' rituals.

For the purpose of this article, a sample of these unofficial rituals is considered. The cases were selected because they are representative of the wide range of modalities in which Schengen has been performed around the world. All four cases (the set of rituals centred on, respectively, a hotel in Beijing, a group of street kids in Kinshasa, a music band in the UK, and an artistic movement in Eastern Europe) share some common features. The first, and most apparent, of these features is that in each case there is an explicit reference to the term 'Schengen' in the name of the subjects taken into consideration.<sup>53</sup> This characteristic is relevant because it discursively anchors the selected practices to the 'original' Schengen border regime. This anchoring occurs thanks to the evocative power of metaphors. Metaphorically speaking, Schengen (the hotel, the band, etc.) *is* Schengen (the border regime).<sup>54</sup> Through their actions, the individuals who carry (or work for an

<sup>53</sup> The initial act of labelling an entity or person as 'Schengen' (and its repetition over time) has been performed by social actors themselves (that is, hotel owners, band members, urban residents, art critics). The attachment of meanings to a practice is therefore not the sole responsibility of the researcher.

<sup>54</sup> On metaphors and their discursive functions, see Andrew Ortony, *Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). On the Schengen metaphor, see Ruben Zaiotti, 'Bridging Commonsense: Pragmatic Metaphors and the 'Schengen Laboratory'', in M. Kornprobst, N. Shah, V. Pouliot and R. Zaiotti (eds), *Metaphors of Globalization: Mirrors, Magicians, Mutinies*

entity that carry) that name produce and reproduce the myth of Schengen, even if they are located outside the social, political and cultural context surrounding Europe's existing territorial arrangement.

Besides the reference to the term 'Schengen', in each case the rituals performed are characterised by the iteration and 'citation' of the recurring themes constituting the Schengen myth's script (that is, 'freedom', 'security' and 'success'). These themes, however, are expressed in unconventional ways. The rituals in fact take place outside Europe and EU official circles, and involve non-governmental actors. Moreover, these rituals, while reinforcing the myth of Schengen thanks to the repeated enactment of its underlying tenets, represent a potential challenge to the myth's very foundations, for they might expose some of the regime's inherent contradictions.

The selected examples of Schengen mythopoiesis also present some distinctive characteristics. First, the rituals' modalities and structure vary from case to case (from the private and highly regulated space of the Schengen Hotel in Beijing, to the public and anarchic environment of the streets of Kinshasa and the creative and choreographed world of music and art). Second, in each case the rituals' 'performers' possess a different level of awareness of their contribution in the establishment of (or challenge to) the myth of Schengen. Third, the geographical location in which the rituals take place changes depending on the distance from the 'real' Schengen (from faraway places such as China and Congo, to Schengen's neighbourhood in Western and Eastern Europe). Finally, there are different degrees in which each ritual reinforces or questions the myth of Schengen (from the more supportive, such as the rituals surrounding the Schengen Hotel, to the more challenging, the artistic movement that is tellingly called 'Non Schengen'). In the next paragraphs, both the common and distinctive features of the four selected cases are examined in more detail.<sup>55</sup>

*a) Welcome to the Hotel Schengen: such a cosmopolitan place. . .*

Beijing is a booming city. As host to the 2008 Olympic Games it has showcased China's growing economic and cultural power to the rest of the world. The construction of new infrastructure to welcome the influx of international travellers has expanded exponentially ever since the Communist regime decided to introduce

(Houndmills: Palgrave 2008), pp. 66–80. The relation between the 'real' and the 'metaphorical' Schengen is further elaborated in the article's conclusions.

<sup>55</sup> A methodological note before proceeding with the article's empirical section. The analysis of the case studies is based on information extrapolated from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source material stems from semi-structured interviews (carried out via electronic mail) with relevant actors (members of the band 'Schengen', artists in the 'Non Schengen' movement, Schengen Hotel's staff) and from participant observation. It should be noted that fieldwork in Beijing was conducted by a locally-based researcher and that practical constraints have prevented *in situ* research on the Congolese case. The broad geographical and thematic scope of the cases taken into consideration has meant that this work could not rely on a 'thick description' of relevant rituals. The interpretivist method adopted in this work to study rituals (which involves the reconstruction of how meanings have been attached to practices and, in turn, how these practices have shaped meanings) also means that there cannot be definitive 'proof' (in the positivist sense) that a myth actually 'exists' and that certain practices contribute to its creation.

more market friendly economic policies in the 1990s. It is this context that the idea of a ‘Schengen International Hotel’ was conceived. As the hotel’s management readily acknowledges, the choice of name is not casual. The reference to ‘Schengen’ is intended to evoke the cosmopolitan aura that the European-based area of free movement is supposed to project, together with other related ‘progressive’ notions such as open-mindedness, sophistication, and freedom.<sup>56</sup> Consistently with this branding effort, the hotel’s targeted clientele is mostly international (that is, non Chinese), especially Western businessmen and tourists. As its website boasts, the hotel signed an agreement with the Olympic Committee to host athletes and travellers in town for this global event. From the way the hotel is associated with the ‘real’ Schengen, it is thus apparent that its management has rehearsed the official narrative promoted by the EU.

The Schengen International Hotel is not the only one of its kind with a topographical name reminiscent of a location that is different from the one where the establishment actually lies. It is arguably one of the most common practices in the hotel industry. After all, almost all respectable cities around the world have a ‘London’ or ‘Paris’ Hotel, even if these hotels are located neither in England nor in France. The Schengen Hotel is also not the only bearing a name of a topographical entity that does not actually exist (we should keep in mind that formally ‘Schengenland’ is not a political entity that we can find on a map; in EU legal documents, the reference is still to the territory of member states). Cities are replete with hotels bearing the names of fictional locations, including mythical ones (for example, ‘Paradise’, ‘El Dorado’).<sup>57</sup>

What distinguishes the case of the Schengen International Hotel in Beijing is that it refers to both a real and a fictional (and – I contend – a mythical as well) entity. The Hotel’s name in fact refers to something that *simultaneously* does and does not exist. In this context ‘Schengen’ is something real because, according to those who chose this name, its referent object is an existing political entity with defined ‘commonsensical’ features; however, it is also mythical, because this political entity does not formally exist, or at least it does not necessarily exist in the way the management of the hotel thinks it does.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> This spin is not that surprising. After all, the purpose of any act of ‘branding’ is to sell a product to a customer, and thus the product should be associated with something positive. In the eyes of the management, ‘Schengen’ is supposed to do the trick.

<sup>57</sup> Tellingly, the Schengen Hotel is one of the rare examples of post-nationalism in the hotel industry (at least in the choice of name). There is in fact – at least to my knowledge – no equivalent ‘EU Hotel’. (There are plenty of ‘Europe’ Hotels though; branding seems to work better if detached from politics. . .). The same could be said of more traditional supranational entities such as international organisations (hence no ‘UN Hotel’, let alone ‘WTO’ or ‘G8’ hotels – admittedly, not very attractive options).

<sup>58</sup> The practice of promoting places that actually do not exist and devising them as imagined reconstructions is relatively common, especially in the heritage sector (for example, legendary and literary locations; Williams, Stephens, *Tourism and Geography* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 177). The existence of such places (but the same could be said of ‘real’ ones) highlights how the tourist experience is, by and large, artificial. It involves the creation of a place that did not exist before. In other words, it is about the (re)invention of places and their mythisation. On tourism and the ‘invention of places’, see Williams, *Tourism and Geography*, p. 172 et ss. On the relation between myth and tourism, see Christoph Hennig, ‘Tourism: Enacting modern myths’, in Graham Dann (ed.), *The Tourist as a Metaphor of the Social World* (CABI Publishing, 2002) and Tom Selwyn, *The Tourist Image: Myths and Myth Making in Tourism* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1996).

This process of myth-making goes beyond the conscious evocation of a pre-existing official narrative, as is the case Schengen Hotel's management. The establishment of the myth of Schengen is made possible primarily through the set of rituals that take place in and around the hotel itself. Such rituals are performed by tourists, businesspeople and the hotel personnel, and involve booking, checking in and out, handling documents, dining, preparing rooms, etc. These practices are repeated according to a script and spatially deployed, with a clear demarcation between the inside and the outside (the 'Schengen (Hotel) space' and 'China').<sup>59</sup> This creates a mental and physical isolation of the tourist/guest from the local environment.<sup>60</sup>

By looking more closely at the features of these rituals, we could argue that the Schengen Hotel represents a microcosm of the 'real' Schengen. In both places, you need to make a reservation/get a visa in order to enter/have an accommodation; certain individuals (businessmen and tourists) are welcomed, while others are rejected because they do not meet minimum financial and security standards; different languages are spoken; a group of individuals is providing services to the travellers; and, as in tourism more generally, the Schengen hotel is reproducing the feeling of being 'home away from home'. But there is more to it than mere correspondence between the two locations. When travellers stay in the Schengen Hotel, they are not feeling as if being in Schengen (in terms of the enjoyment of Western comforts, a cosmopolitan atmosphere, etc.). They are actually in Schengen. And by being there and performing the Hotel's coded rituals, these individuals are actually contributing to the establishment of its myth.

### *b) Performing Europe in Africa: the Schegues of Kinshasa*

To continue the voyage in search of rituals reinforcing the myth of Schengen, I now turn to Africa, and, more precisely, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As in the case of the hotel in Beijing, the referent object is an entity that carries the Schengen name. In the present context, however, there is no trace of the glitz beaming from the halls of a four star hotel. The 'natural' environment where the reproduction of Schengen occurs is the poor neighbourhood of Congo's capital, Kinshasa. Here we find a group of street kids called 'Shegues'.

According to Biaya,<sup>61</sup> the slang term 'Shegue' or 'Shege' has a cultural connotation. It originates from 'Schengen', and it defines in the Congolese urban collective imagination the condition of the illegal migrant in the West and in the DRC.<sup>62</sup> A Shegue is both a real and imagined migrant. Originally, this trope

<sup>59</sup> On the performative aspect of tourism, see Tim Edensor, 'Staging Tourism: Tourists as Performers', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27:2 (2000), pp. 322–44.

<sup>60</sup> There is an interesting parallel here with the idea of (Westernised) tourist enclaves acting as cocoons or 'environmental bubbles' endowed with all the comforts available 'back home' (See Williams, *Tourism and Geography*, p. 178).

<sup>61</sup> T. K. Biaya, 'Dynamique des performances et discours identitaires: espace d'énonciation dans la diaspora africaine', *Étude de la population africaine/African Population Studies*, 14 :2 (1998), pp. 1–29.

<sup>62</sup> This interpretation is not the only one available. According to an alternative reading of the term's origins, 'Schegue' derives from 'Che Guevara', the name of the Latin American revolutionary figure, symbol of courage and rebellion against oppression and injustice.

referred to a slacker, drug-addicted, homeless kid, mostly from one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city (Matongue) who gets by with money gained from petty illicit activities and that has developed a rich experience of illegality and violent confrontation with the authorities.<sup>63</sup> Since it first surfaced in the early 1990s, the meaning of the term has expanded to include all young Kinois (Kinshasa residents) born after Congo's independence.

The trope summarises the Kinois urban experience constituted by atmosphere (music, alcohol, easy sex) and geographical mobility. Although it is only one of the various sub-cultures in Kinshasa, the Shegues have achieved a particular important status in the city and throughout the country. According to Biaya, these street kids have come to represent a unifying symbol of the crisis gripping the country. They represent one of the figures of popular contestation against the rich and powerful. In subverting the established order, the Shegues challenge a chaotic democratic transition and the arrogance of the local political class. Tellingly, having recognised the political power of the *ndomolo* – a popular dance these kids perform in the streets of Kinshasa<sup>64</sup> – local authorities have denounced it and attempted to ridicule it.<sup>65</sup>

The Shegue street culture is not just a local phenomenon. Its constitutive practices are inextricably linked with the West, often in the guise of Congo's former European colonial powers. Besides the dream of reaching Europe (some of them actually tried and made it), the relationship with the centre is established through these kids' everyday social and cultural activities, such as wearing knock-off designer fashions that emulate those of rich people in the West and adopting fashion styles that embody a political statement whose meanings are creatively borrowed from Europe or North America.<sup>66</sup>

In terms of its relations with Europe, life in the streets of Kinshasa for the Shegues is similar to that experienced by young would-be migrants in Tijuana, the Mexican city that has become a favoured destination for individuals trying to illegally slip into the US. As is the case for Central American migrants in their real or imagined encounters with 'El Norte' the Shegues, embody and reproduce the mythical vision of a promised land of opportunities away from home. By their very existence, these kids carry Schengen around and make it alive. This is the case even if they are not in Europe, or never get there during their (often brief) lives. While still in the streets of Kinshasa, they in fact stand for those migrants (often illegal) who are already in Europe, or who are trying to get there.

Seen in this light, the Shegues' actions could be considered rituals that allow Schengen to take shape beyond Europe's borders. They also represent the reality of what Schengen aspires to be, namely an ideal of 'freedom come true'. There are

<sup>63</sup> Biaya, 'Dynamique des performances et discours identitaires', p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> *Ndomolo* is a highly erotic dance, accompanied by an imagined dialogue in Swahili between an aggressive child soldier and a fearless and vulgar Kinois, leading to the death of the latter. It is a form of violence related to identity and expiation in the encounter with foreign child soldiers.

<sup>65</sup> Biaya, 'Dynamique des performances et discours identitaires', p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> Exemplary are some of the hairstyles popular in the 1990s, such as the cuts with yellow ('à la Jospin') or red ('à la Rodman') highlights. At the time, Lionel Jospin, a French politician, embodied the opposition of the French left against the then-President Jacques Chirac. Dennis Rodman, an outspoken and eccentric American basketball player, instead represented the fight against the American moral order and conformism. Both hairstyles symbolised the victory of the people over the dictator (that is, the then-President Mobutu; Biaya, 'Dynamique des performances et discours identitaires', p. 28).

therefore some correspondences with the case of the Schengen Hotel in Beijing. The parallel stops here, however. The impact of the Shegues' actions and the image they project is substantially different. Unlike the customers at the Hotel, these kids are not welcome (both in Kinshasa and elsewhere), and they do not possess the (legal) means to freely travel to Europe. In contrast to the order and cleanness of the Schengen Hotel, they live in a lawless and 'messy' environment. On the other hand, because of these characteristics, the boys' lives highlight what is carefully hidden in the staged rituals of the Schengen Hotel, and, more generally, in the EU official discourse, namely the regime's exclusionary features. By foregrounding the contradictions within the Schengen regime, such as the tension between its emphasis on the ideal of freedom of movement and the reality of the 'wall' surrounding Europe, the Shegues threaten the stability of the Schengen myth. This challenge can have important consequences for the issue of change. According to Biaya, the sub-culture that the Schegues produce in their everyday lives represents an epistemological rupture between the end of decolonisation and the emergence of 'localized globalization'.<sup>67</sup> Through their actions, these kids attempt to break with a heavy social historicity and to get out of a postcolonial vision imposed from outside. Schengen's ongoing mythopoiesis thus carries with it the seeds of its possible transformation.

*c) Schengen sounds good: playing with the myth*

Street kids in Kinshasa use urban culture as a means to express themselves, and, as I argued in the previous section, through their ritual activities they contribute to the creation of (and potential challenge to) the Schengen myth. The same could be said of another popular non-representational means of expression, namely music. Music has historically played a central role in the creation of myths, including political myths.<sup>68</sup> Through the articulation of social values in specific musical repertoires, this performative art has in fact often functioned as means of transmission of a dominant ideology.<sup>69</sup> The relation between music and myth is apparent not just in musical compositions (for example, the mythical figures in Richard Wagner's works), but also in the socio-cultural milieu in which music is created and performed. Music has been influenced by existing social standards and norms, and in turn it has influenced the society surrounding it. At the same time, music and society interact with and mediate one another within and across socio-cultural boundaries.<sup>70</sup> This is not just the case for a society's high culture, but also its popular expressions. This has always been the case, but contemporary music is one of the domains in which the blurring of distinction between 'high' and 'popular' culture has been more marked, especially in the West.

<sup>67</sup> Biaya, 'Dynamique des performances et discours identitaires', p. 25.

<sup>68</sup> Eero Tarasti, *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music* (Walter de Gruyter, 1979).

<sup>69</sup> Richard D. Leppert and Susan McClary, *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), p. xiv.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

As with the two cases examined in the previous sections, the subject considered here (a contemporary British band) carries with it an explicit reference to Europe's border control regime. On their website, the band members explain the origins of their name by writing that they 'stumbled across it in reference to the Schengen Treaty.'<sup>71</sup> Thus, as was the case for the Schengen Hotel and the Schegues in Kinshasa, there is a direct link between the band and the 'original' Schengen. In this case, however, this 'marriage' seems rather casual. The band carries this particular name because its members 'liked the sound of the word': there is no apparent conscious attempt to link their music to the Schengen regime, or to make any particular political statement. The genre of music the band plays seems to support this claim. Reviewers have described the 'Schengen sound' as 'lush, relaxed, gorgeously atmospheric electronic [...] and '(s)eizing, atmospheric and unique',<sup>72</sup> characteristics that seem far removed from those we might experience when visiting Europe's bustling and chaotic external frontiers (and, for that matter, the Schengen Hotel in Beijing or the streets of Kinshasa). In what sense then is it possible to argue that the band helps to support the establishment of the myth of Schengen?

The contribution of Schengen (the band) to the construction of the myth of Schengen (the border regime) can be better understood if we move away from the emphasis on music *per se* and its textual dimension, and shift to its performative dimension. This is the kind of move that a growing number of authors in Performative Studies (musicology being one of its sub-disciplines) have recently suggested. Traditionally, music and performance were often presented in music literature as separate. The new practice-oriented paradigm advocated in contemporary Performance Studies stresses the extent to which signification is constructed through the act of performance, between the performers themselves, and between the performers and the audience. Performative meaning is thus a process and cannot be reduced to product.<sup>73</sup>

In the present example, when Schengen (the band) is playing ('performing'), it is contributing to the reproduction of the Schengen myth. The same could be said of other rituals surrounding the band, such as selling music, touring, interacting with fans, etc. As with the hotel in Beijing, these activities represent a microcosm of Europe's border regime. Through them, the band is indirectly 'promoting' the Schengen regime, helping cement its standing in popular culture. Although the band's sound does not seem to echo the Schengen regime's script, arguably the band embodies a music genre that indeed reflects a borderless Europe, a cosmopolitan blending of (European) sounds. After all, the band can freely (that is, without visas) tour across Europe, and the fans (if holding an EU passport) can freely follow them. This would not happen in the same way if the band and its fans were not from the EU.

<sup>71</sup> The band's website can be found at {<http://www.schengen.freeuk.com>}.

<sup>72</sup> All quotes are taken from the band's website. See previous footnote.

<sup>73</sup> Nicholas Cook, 'Music as Practice', in Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, Richard Middleton (eds), *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 205; on performativity in music, see also Leppert and McClary, *Music and Society*, and Lawrence Kramer, 'Signs Taken for Wonders Words, Music, and Performativity', in Steven Paul Scher, Suzanne M. Lodato, Walter Bernhart, Suzanne Aspden (eds), *Word and Music Studies* (Rodopi, 2002).



The political implications stemming from Schengen (the band)'s existence and the rituals surrounding it do not end here. It should be noted that the band's members, as British citizens, are actually not part of Schengen (the free travel area). Thus, when playing outside continental Europe, 'Schengen is outside Schengen', as it were. Since Schengen is a British band, its members are allowed to travel to the Schengen area, because the (Schengen) visa for British citizens is waived. Still, the band's members need a passport to enter Europe's free travel area. In these circumstances, what we see is an instance of 'Schengen entering Schengen'. As in a case of transubstantiation, the band is both Schengen and *in* Schengen. The most ironic aspect of this situation is that the band is British, and the British government (and the majority of the population in the UK) is notoriously sceptical (if not outrightly opposed) to the Schengen regime, especially the idea of abolishing national border controls, which the regime supports. Hence, although the choice of the band's name was not strictly speaking 'political', its implications clearly are.

*d) (Non) Schengen art: territoriality as aesthetic performance*

In the previous sections I have examined various sets of rituals that reproduce and reinforce the myth of Schengen. I have also shown how these rituals might represent an actual or potential challenge to Schengen's mythopoiesis. The questioning of the myth was not, however, explicitly formulated in political terms. The case that I explore in this section, namely the series of art performances recently carried out by a group of Eastern European artists, instead represents a more conscious attempt to challenge the emerging myth of Schengen. Milevska has defined the work of these authors as 'Non Schengen Art'.<sup>74</sup>

As their name suggests, the main *problematique* that this group of artists addresses is the impact of the Schengen border regime on the everyday life of Eastern European citizens (those holding passports of countries that are not yet Schengen members) and of the artists themselves. Because of their citizenship, in order to present their work in Western Europe, these artists need to obtain a visa. To challenge what they perceive as a clamp down on their freedom of expression, they imagine performances, objects, installations, and video or photography projects that are often clandestine attempts for finding a way to trick the political system and bureaucratic procedures.<sup>75</sup> As in the case of the street kids in Kinshasa, these performances are often based on illegal tactics that mirror the creative ways in which migrants try to sneak across Europe's external borders, such as faking passports, bribing officials, avoiding surveillance cameras, overstaying visas, white weddings, etc. Their criticism of the myth of Schengen, rather than overt and outspoken, is evoked by their actions. Like the kids in the streets of Kinshasa, the Non Schengen artists 'plunge' themselves into the very system they are trying to

<sup>74</sup> Suzana Milevska, 'Non-Schengen art: the phantasm of belonging', *paper presented at the UCL school of Slavonic and East European studies 7th annual international postgraduate conference, Inclusion Exclusion* (University College London, 16–18 February 2006).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 'The Phantasm of Belonging: belonging without having something in common', *mimeo* (2006), p. 3.

portray. They are not just representing an illegal migrant in their art; they are performing it. Thanks to these performances, art becomes part of everyday life. But the artists' objective is not to reify the 'everydayness' that Schengen represents; rather, it is to cunningly disrupt it.

Milevska refers to several examples of Non Schengen art. Given space limitations, I will only focus on one that I deem particularly representative of the line of argumentation I am developing in this article, namely the artistic projects conceived and performed by the Serbian author Tanja Ostojić.<sup>76</sup> In her performance *Crossing Borders*, realised in 2000, the author illegally crossed the border between Slovenia and Austria. When she crossed the border, Slovenia was still a non Schengen country, and its borders with the EU were heavily fortified. According to Ostojić, the journey was possible only because of the help she received from her Austrian friends who accompanied her in the treacherous trek across the Slovenian-Austrian mountains.<sup>77</sup>

In parallel to *Crossing Borders*, Ostojić carried out another related art performance called *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport*. The project was based on an Internet advertisement with an image of the artist, and on the distribution of leaflets and posters in a shopping mall in the Albanese capital Skopje. As the performance's title suggests, the goal of this advertisement campaign was to find a potential husband with an EU passport in order to 'legally' move to Western Europe.<sup>78</sup> The project gradually transferred from the realm of 'imaginary' to the realm of 'real' when the artist met and married one of the 'virtual' suitors (a fellow German artist). The complex intertwining between the 'imaginary', 'real' and 'symbolic' continued when the artist started facing the German state authorities in order to acquire the long-awaited Schengen visa and started going through the seemingly endless procedure for long-term residency.<sup>79</sup>

According to Ostojić's intentions, these artistic performances contain a clear political message:

I want to provoke the opening of one's mind or perception to something that s/he has maybe not thought of, or experienced, or was not aware of before. Although my experience tells me that art cannot quickly change social or political reality, it's important that it is not apolitical. Art sometimes opens up certain questions; it can even offer different value systems from current mainstream trends.<sup>80</sup>

Performances such as *Crossing Borders* and *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport* indeed raise some uncomfortable questions about the EU and its claim to represent a space of freedom. Freedom for whom? And what about those left out? The political relevance of Ostojić's work and that of other members of the Non Schengen Art movement is that they unveil Schengen's exclusionary underpinnings. Their artistic performances thus take part in the making of the myth of Schengen, if only as a means to debunk it from within.

<sup>76</sup> For an overview of Ostojić's work, see 'Tanja Ostojić – Personal Homepage', available at: {<http://www.van.at/see/tanja/index.htm>}.

<sup>77</sup> Tanja Ostojić, 'Mission Statement on Three works', available at: {<http://www.kultur.at/howl/tanja/>}.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. See also Milevska, 'Non-Schengen art', p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> 'Interview with Tanja Ostojić', available at: {<http://www.van.at/see/tanja/>}.

### Conclusion: Schengen between myth and reality

In his analysis of the Schengen regime's institutions and their functioning, Van Der Rijjt reports an anecdote involving the US Mission to the EU in Brussels.<sup>81</sup> Apparently, a staff member once posted a message on the Mission's Intranet service candidly asking what seemed a straightforward question. Since he could find this political entity, the staff member wondered whether anybody could help him locate the 'Schengen-countries' on a map of Europe. . .

Of course, this mysterious political-territorial entity does not exist, so the question posed by the US staff member seems rather silly. But is that really the case? With the Schengen regime, EU officials have consciously attempted to create the impression that something new in Europe's political landscape is indeed emerging. This exercise in 'political myth-making' is part of a larger EU project involving the construction a single European space, or what Jensen and Richardson's call a 'monotopia'.<sup>82</sup> The EU monotopia is supposed to be a single, common space within which all constraints to the movement of goods, peoples, services, and money have been removed. Besides Schengen, the other major instruments to achieve this goal have been the Single Market and single currency. This vision is central to the governance of European space. 'A rationality of monotopia exists, and it is inextricably linked with a governmentality of Europe, expressed in a will to order space, to create a seamless and integrated space which is being pursued through the emerging field of European spatial policy'.<sup>83</sup> The objective of this policy is to achieve greater control over Europe's territory and more legitimacy among European citizens.

According to Rumford, there are good reasons to challenge the EU's effort to construct a myth of a European monotopia, for it obfuscates the fact that European spaces are not restricted to what is included in the EU integration project.<sup>84</sup> The most familiar European spaces (for example, the Single Market) are all managed by the EU. Rumford counters that there is another dimension to European spaces not captured by the EU's narrative of integration. European spaces do not in fact fit perfectly with the space of the Union. For example, Europeanised spaces such as the Single Market and Schengen, in addition to promoting the idea of deeper EU integration, also foreground the incomplete nature of this processes (the Single Market extends beyond the borders of the Union; not all EU members are in Schengen and some Schengen members are not part of the EU). Even the distinction between the EU/Europe and the rest of the world/non-EU space is in practice very blurred.<sup>85</sup>

Rumford thus warns us that EU-sponsored attempts to establish the myth of Europe's monotopia has blinded us to the fact that there are alternative spaces in the continent. This article has tried to explore these alternative spaces, by

<sup>81</sup> W. Van Der Rijjt, 'Schengen depuis le 26 Mars 1995', in M. Den Boer, (ed.), *The Implementation of Schengen: First the Widening, now the Deepening* (Maastricht: European Institute of Public Administration, 1997), p. 47.

<sup>82</sup> O. Jensen and T. Richardson, *Making European Space: Mobility, Power and Territorial Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>83</sup> Jensen and Richardson, *Making European Space*, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Chris Rumford, 'Rethinking European Spaces: Territory, Borders, Governance', *Comparative European Politics*, 4:2/3 (2006), p. 133.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

expanding the scope of the analysis to include a variety of ritualised practices taking place beyond Europe and the institutionalised setting of the EU. To accomplish this task, a performative approach to mythopoiesis has been elaborated and applied to studying some examples of unconventional rituals that were deemed representative of how the Schengen regime's myth is currently reproduced around the world.

The theoretical added value of using a performative approach to the study of myth-making is that it calls for a conceptual shift away from the emphasis on narratives and symbols towards performances, practices and rituals. It also calls for a reformulation of existing notions of agency that can negotiate the ideal/material dichotomy without privileging one side over the other. Such an approach shows us that, in order to go beyond the instrumental vision of agency advocated by mainstream literature on political myth-making, it is necessary to stress the practical aspect of social reality over the symbolic/ideational. A performative approach also points to a new politics of change, for it foregrounds the inconsistent and unstable foundations upon which most political myths are built.

Last but not least, the adoption of a performative approach to study Europe's territoriality offers an intriguing re-reading of the story of the puzzled staff member at the US Mission in Brussels. From a performative perspective, we should not dismiss his query as just silly. Performatively, there is no clear distinction between the 'real' and 'mythical' Schengen, between a pre-existing political entity and its practical instantiations. The myth of Schengen *is* the reality of Schengen. And, in turn, the reality of Schengen is its myth. If that is the case, in responding to the staff member's query, we could suggest that, if he'd looked more carefully, he should have been able find the 'Schengen-countries' on a map of Europe after all.