

arada

a film by
Jonas Schaffter

PRESSBOOK



Documentary, 83 min.
Switzerland 2020

OV: Swiss German, Turkish
Subtitles: German, French, English

www.arada-film.com
facebook: arada-film
Trailer: vimeo.com/384691951

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I. SYNOPSIS

«Arada» follows the stories of three men who grew up in Switzerland but do not have Swiss passports. Due to criminal offenses they have been deported to Turkey, the homeland of their parents. Vedat and Duran were expelled only a few years ago, while Mustafa was deported in the 1990s.

Mustafa lives in the village of his ancestors where he started a new family. He's come to terms with his Swiss past even though he left behind a – now adult – son when he was forced to leave the country. Vedat and Duran live in metropolitan Istanbul, and both work as call agents for German-speaking companies. They struggle to cope with the local culture and still cling to their Swiss identity.

Arada means (in)between in Turkish. In its examination of a highly relevant, controversial subject – the deportation of second-generation immigrants convicted of criminal offenses – the film touches on fundamental questions about the concepts of nationality and cultural identity in a time of resurgent nationalism. «Arada» explores a hidden milieu and tells moving stories about individual human fates behind the political and legal disputes over deportation policy.



II. QUOTES

«The film shows images of luminous beauty like the skyline of Istanbul or the snowy Anatolian mountains. However, these apparently touristic views are only reinforcing the loneliness in the protagonists' voices. And their repentance. (...) But Schaffter proves that there is more to it than mere nostalgia, broaching the issues of economic difficulties and the increasing nationalistic atmosphere in Turkey.»

Marcy Goldberg, WOZ Die Wochenzeitung, 01/23/2020

««Arada» sees Schaffter filming the humanity that hides behind three destinies which are different, yet fundamentally alike; he follows the existential doubts experienced by these three men, who know they have lost the opportunity of a lifetime. What makes the young Swiss director's documentary particularly interesting isn't just the fact that he tackles the delicate subject of forced expulsions, but also - and most importantly - his exploration of male identity. (...) Jonas Schaffter successfully avoids the trap of rose-tinted portrayals, showing the positive but also the shadier sides of his three protagonists.»

Muriel del Don, Cineurope, 01/31/2020

III. DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

For many years socio-cultural exchanges have been the focus of my creative work. Mainly in my photographic and filmic works I have repeatedly portrayed individuals from a variety of backgrounds, making them accessible to others via the particular presentational form. In the case of ARADA, the focus is now on second-generation Turkish residents who had to leave Switzerland for Turkey against their will.

Swiss naturalization law and local deportation practices have been tightened significantly in recent years. This has had a powerful effect on how delinquent «secondos» (as the children of immigrants are called in Switzerland) without Swiss passports are dealt with. A prison term of just a few months is now enough to be expelled from Switzerland. Although the debate on how to deal with delinquent foreigners is omnipresent in Switzerland, practically no one knows what happens to those individuals once they are deported to their supposed homeland. In Turkey of all places I got to know a side of Switzerland I had never imagined before.

In my film, I'm not interested in imposing a specific political viewpoint on viewers, but I would like to recount, as an observer, what it means to be involuntarily deported to a homeland that is foreign to you and what effects this has on a person's identity. This film is first and foremost about the people portrayed and their inner world. My aim was to deal with individuals rather than to generalize.

Even if the story is ostensibly Swiss-Turkish, the film points toward a larger theme: We live in a time when our identities are becoming increasingly blurred and intertwined. The Swiss, the German or the Norwegian no longer exist (if they ever did). But as we become more multicultural, we are also building more and more borders and walls. Such times call for a nuanced examination of complex themes such as home and identity. I wanted to take on this challenge with my film.

Jonas Schaffter

IV. HOW THIS PROJECT CAME ABOUT

In November 2015 I set off for my first research trip to Turkey – with a list of addresses of expelled Swiss-Turks who were scattered all over Turkey. Although I had heard a lot about the subject, I had no idea what to expect on this three-week trip.

Already on the second day I was sitting with my research assistant Ali in the apartment of Vedat, Hasan and Hakan – three Swiss-Turks who had been deported from Switzerland. All three had met in Istanbul and started a little Swiss community by sharing a flat. That evening we all sat in their living room until 3am. I realized that the three men have to deal on a daily basis with the questions that I was interested in. They are all homesick – for Switzerland. Despite their Turkish roots, they do not feel at home in Turkey: they miss their football club, Migros iced tea or a cheese fondue with friends. Switzerland is idealized. On our taxi ride back to the hotel early in the morning, Ali and I didn't say a word. We both had to process what we had just seen and heard. But on this ride it became one-hundred percent clear to me: This story has to be told. I wanted to bring the emotional experience I had that evening to a larger audience through a documentary film.

Over the course of several months of research, I traveled across Turkey and met other potential protagonists. This period of research was marked by various terrorist attacks and the attempted coup against President Erdogan. The events also had an effect on my protagonists.

The shoot with my cameraman Simon Denzler took place in September and November 2017, and in March and June 2018 at exclusively Turkish locations. After several years of production, we were able to complete the film in November 2019 and show it to the public for the first time in January 2020.

V. PROTAGONISTS

Vedat:

Vedat grew up in Zuchwil near Solothurn. He'd arrived in Switzerland with his parents when he was one year old. In the noughties he made a name for himself in Solothurn with a marijuana shop. Later Vedat got addicted to cocaine and convicted of drug trafficking and was allegedly involved in a stabbing. The last offense,



one of the main reasons for his deportation, he vehemently denies. Up to his deportation in 2014, he had not set foot outside Switzerland in eighteen years. After being expelled, he lived with two other deported Swiss-Turks in the metropolis of Istanbul. His roommates came from the Basel area. Their common destiny bound the three together, and they formed a strong friendship. However, when we started filming they were no longer living together. Vedat moved in with his mother who had returned to the country of her youth after thirty-eight years in Switzerland. She now lived in an apartment in Beylikdüzü, a district on the outskirts of Istanbul. After only a few months, however, she moved back to her more familiar life in Switzerland.

Vedat still vehemently refuses to accept his fate: He is not ready to embrace a future in Turkey, far from what he feels is his real home. He says of himself that he is a freedom-loving person and cannot identify at all with the Turkish culture and way of life.

According to the court ruling, he is not allowed to enter Switzerland for an unspecified period of time. After a five-year wait, he can submit an application to return to Switzerland, but generally this is not granted for several years.

During the first few years in Istanbul, Vedat worked in a large Swiss mobile phone company call center, a job he found thanks to his perfect Swiss German. Although the wages and working conditions were bad, Vedat liked the job because it allowed him to remain connected to Switzerland. But being constantly in touch with the country he grew up in makes it all the more difficult for him to come to terms with his new situation and leave behind Switzerland and his past. Vedat now works at home as a call agent for a German sales broadcaster. He doesn't like leaving his apartment – because he feels uneasy in Turkish society, but also because of the back pain that has haunted him since his early youth.

Duran:

Of Kurdish descent, Duran grew up in Basel. He also lives in Istanbul now, and he has been holed up in his apartment in the infamous Istanbul district of Kustepe for almost four years. For a while, he lived there with Emrah, another Kurd who was expelled from Switzerland. Duran's parents fled to Switzerland from



Eastern Turkey in the 1980s as Alevi Kurds. Duran was born in Switzerland. He was raised to be critical of Turkey and in his childhood and teenage years, he avoided any contact with Turks in Switzerland. He no longer feels hatred for Turks, but he still wants to return home to his Swiss wife Ramona and his three-year-old son Daryan as soon as possible. He wants to be a good father and tries to do this as best as possible from Turkey. He skypes practically around the clock with his wife and son.

Like Vedat, Duran was addicted to drugs when he lived in Switzerland. He financed his addiction with thefts, burglaries and was also involved in several fights. In the years before he was expelled, he was unemployed. Since Duran isn't considered to be a dangerous criminal and committed primarily minor offenses, and his expulsion affected a woman and a child with Swiss passports, he would be entitled to return to Switzerland soon. But there is another problem: If he were checked for his ID, for example at the airport in Istanbul, he would be immediately drafted into the Turkish military. Duran is afraid of being sent to the war zones in eastern Turkey as a soldier to fight against other Kurds there.

Duran works at a Swiss call center. His job there is to sell printer cartridges to Swiss companies and corporations. Unlike Vedat, Duran and his call center staff do not use their Turkish names. Duran's Swiss pseudonym is «Marcel Vögtli».

Duran is reluctant to leave his apartment except for work. After the attempted coup and the implementation of Erdogan's new presidential system, he is afraid of police controls and the repression against minorities.

Duran expects to return to his family in Switzerland as soon as possible despite the circumstances – the relationship with his wife also suffers from the distance.

Mustafa:

Mustafa, now 50 years old, was deported to Turkey twenty-five years ago – partly due to speeding offenses. He usually avoids answering when asked about the exact reasons for his expulsion. He was young and had to take the blame for other people's offenses, he claims. Unlike Vedat, he doesn't seem to have



really dealt with his past and usually blames others for his deportation. Before being deported he spent three years at the Lenzburg correctional facility. Immediately after arriving in Turkey, he was drafted into the military. Mustafa fought against the Kurdish guerilla group PKK in a chaotic war in the 1990s. He narrowly escaped death.

After his military service, he lived in Istanbul for a few years and then traveled all over Turkey as a tent dealer. He has been living in the village of his now-deceased parents near the Anatolian district town of Denizli for over ten years. In this conservative farming village, Mustafa runs a modest farm and manages a small tea house nearby. He spends his free time with his two daughters from a second marriage. The son he had with his first wife still lives in Switzerland and became a father himself a few years ago. Mustafa and his son have had no contact for several years.

Mustafa is in poor health. He had a heart attack shortly before we started filming. There is only one thing he would like to do before his death: Travel to Switzerland again and see how his village, Hunzenschwil in the canton of Aargau, has changed over the years.

VI. BACKGROUND

FOREIGNERS FROM ABROAD

Foreign Infiltration to Enforcement Initiative

Switzerland has always had an ambivalent relationship with foreigners. Taking in asylum seekers is seen as a «noble duty». At the same time, the country relies on cheap labor from abroad. This is how it is today and the situation was also similar in the 1960s when thousands of Italians and Spaniards set out for Switzerland as seasonal workers. The objective has always been to limit the number of the foreign residents in Switzerland. The first major attempt of this kind was the so-called «Schwarzenbach Initiative». The ballot measure demanded that the number of foreigners be limited to 10% of the total population. When the Swiss voted on it there was a record turnout of 74%. 46% of the voters were in favor, sending shock waves throughout Europe.

Over the past twenty years, the debate on foreigners has been fueled primarily by the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP). The group has achieved three important victories in recent years: the adoption of an initiative that banned the construction of Minarets (2009), the approval of a ballot measure to tighten the deportation laws for foreign offenders (2010) as well as the initiative against «Mass Immigration» (2014). Although an initiative that demanded even tougher deportation rules was clearly rejected with 58.9% of votes, Switzerland's policies against delinquent foreigners have been steadily become more radical.

According to one of the leading experts on migration law, Professor Alberto Achermann, Switzerland stands out internationally when it comes to dealing with second-generation foreign residents or «secondos» as they're called in Switzerland. In an interview with the weekly newspaper WOZ, Achermann said: «When I ask foreign colleagues how they deal with secondos, they are amazed at my question because in other places the children of immigrants are not usually considered foreigners: in Germany they become – with certain restrictions—automatically naturalized.» In concrete terms, this means that none of Arada's three protagonists would have been expelled from Germany or Austria, for example. Switzerland is a special case not only because of its rigorous deportation laws but also because of its – in the international context - very restrictive naturalization practise.

HOMESICKNESS – THE SWISS DISEASE

Morbus Helveticus

Homesickness is the longing for being home while you're abroad. The Basel-based physician Johannes Hofer first described this malady under the term «nostalgia» in 1688. It is also known as «Swiss disease» (Latin: morbus helveticus). The term was originally coined in reference to Swiss mercenaries in foreign armies who suffered from homesickness. According to the ideas of the time, it is a melancholy arising from an unsatisfied longing for home, which is said to result in a breakdown of physical health, exhaustion, fever and even death. In France, for instance, Swiss mercenaries were purportedly banned under penalty of death until the mid-eighteenth century from singing or whistling «Kuhreihen» (French: Ranz des Vaches), a well-known pastoral song in French-speaking Switzerland. The French authorities feared that by hearing the song Swiss mercenaries could not help feeling homesick and that the melody could even lead them to desert their army.

TURKS AND KURDS IN SWITZERLAND

The Turkish diaspora represents the sixth-largest immigrant group in Switzerland. Over 120,000 people of Turkish origin live in Switzerland. Nearly all have a permanent residency permit, even if more than half only have a Turkish passport. Around 45,000 Turkish immigrants have become Swiss.

Turkey is a country with a wide variety of religious, ethnic and cultural groups. The majority are Sunni Muslims. This social diversity is also evident in immigrants from Turkey. The largest and most visible groups are the Turks and Kurds. In addition to a Sunni Muslim majority, Switzerland has a large number of Alevi. Most people from Turkey live in German-speaking Switzerland, especially in the cantons of Zurich, Aargau, Basel-City and Basel-Country. While Turks with Turkish identity live primarily in the canton of Aargau, Kurdish-Turks live mainly in the Basel area. Across Switzerland, the number of Turkish-Kurds is estimated at 70,000; 12,000 of them live in the city of Basel. Proportionally, far more Turkish-Kurds live in Switzerland than in Germany, for instance.

VII. BIOGRAPHIES

Jonas Schaffter

Jonas Schaffter was born in 1988 in the farming village of Metzerlen in the canton of Solothurn, Switzerland. He attended the Academy of Art and Design (HGK) in Basel and graduated in 2013 with a bachelor's degree in visual communication. During a one-year stay in Istanbul he studied photography for a semester at Mimar Sinan Fine Art University. He then worked as a photographer and filmmaker on the Bosphorus and



at the point de vue production company in Basel. From 2012 to 2015, Jonas Schaffter realized «Offside Istanbul», a fifty-two-minute-long documentary film on African football players lured to Turkey under false promises. Over a three-year period beginning in 2016, Jonas Schaffter completed his master's degree in film studies at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), specializing in documentary film production. During this time he made «Arada», his first feature-length documentary film.

soap factory GmbH/Frank Matter

soap factory GmbH is a film production company based in Basel. Frank Matter has realized a variety of feature and documentary films since 1993 as a director and producer. The films have been awarded numerous international awards.

Films:

As a director: «Parallel Lives» (2020), «Von heute auf morgen» (2013), «The Definition of Insanity» (2004), «The Beauty of My Island» (1999), «Morocco» (1996), «Hannelore» (1993)

As a producer: «Der Gletscher kalbt nicht mehr» (in development), «Flannery's» (in post-production), «Play with the devil» (in production), «Ruäch» (in post-production), «Arada» (2020), «Who's afraid of Alice Miller?» (2020), «Ciao Babylon» (2017), «Amalia e Giancarlo» (2017), «Thomas Hirschhorn – Gramsci Monument» (2015), «La buena vida – The Good Life» (2015), «Grozny Blues» (2015), «Nel giardino dei suoni» (2010)

IX. CREDITS

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Music written by
and performed by

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Jonas Schaffter
Roland von Tessin, Selin Dettwiler
Thomas Jeker
Thomas Jeker and Christian Moser (Cümbüş)

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Line producer ZHdK
Directing mentor ZHdK
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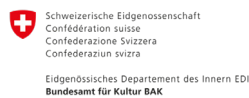
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