

Abstract

In the Wait for the Catastrophe: Listening, Fabulation, and Belonging under Surveillance

What does it mean to live in over-scrutinized fields, under the gaze of research, media, and security, in Brussels, Belgium? Certain neighborhoods in the city have been subjected to intense policing, resulting in research fatigue and distrust.

This paper investigates how documentary filmmaking, as a research practice, can serve as an alternative mode of inquiry, one that resists extractive observation and allows for speculation.

Focusing on surveillance as an intimate force shaping everyday life, affect, and belonging, the paper examines how documentary practices of **Listening** and **Fabulation** can trace and sustain collective imaginaries. Listening, conceived as an attentive counter-practice to surveillance, transforms sound recording and ephemeral encounters in public space into a playful method that negotiates a filmic *hors-champ* (Deleuze, 1989) and reconfigures the politics of attention surrounding those rendered visible by the surveillance apparatus.

Building on Glissant's notion of **Opacity** (1997), the paper further explores how editing and docufiction can disrupt the "real," creating spaces of partial truth, partial visibility, and refuge from the suspicious gaze. It argues that fabulating the real enables not only protection for those encountered and their contributions, but also the emergence of more complex, and situated forms of belonging in times of crisis.

Biography

Farah Kassem is a Lebanese filmmaker and artistic researcher based in Brussels. She holds a Bachelor's in Audiovisual Studies (ALBA), an MFA in Documentary Filmmaking (DocNomads), and is completing a PhD in the arts (KU Leuven and LUCA) in Belgium. Her work explores the poetics and politics of the intimate and the everyday. Her debut feature, *We Are Inside* (2024), has screened at more than 40 international film festivals receiving 22 awards.