

# الناحية الثانية

## The Other Side



A short film by Mukhtar Shehata and Samuli Schielke

### Short synopsis

The Other Side is a short film about class boundaries and the gaze towards the other side whereby people search to cross the lines that separate them. The hero, a bearded man, appears to be planning a suicide attack against the Abu Qir railway line which divides the poor from the rich in Alexandria. Yet it soon turns out that he is pursuing quite different objectives, trying to reach something or someone on the other side. And as he gazes at the other side, his gaze is returned by others.

### Long synopsis

Shot on location in the district of Al-Mandara in Alexandria, The Other Side is set at two boundaries that mark the lives and expectations of the inhabitants of the area. One is the Abu Qir railway line that runs parallel to the coastline, separating a wealthy neighbourhood at the seafront from a poor, informal area on the inland side. Inhabitants cross the railway daily for work and shopping, but crossing it in social terms by joining the upper middle class living at the seafront remains a dream to most of them. The other boundary is the Mediterranean sea, which separates North Africa and the Middle East from wealthy Europe.

The hero, a man with extremist looks from the poor side of the railroad, finds the railroad as impenetrable as the walls of Berlin and Palestine. But if his course of action seems violent at first, it soon takes a different turn. Standing at the railroad, he faces the impossibility of a love across social



classes. Having finally crossed one wall under suspicious circumstances, he finds himself facing new walls. Gazing across the sea, he wonders whether there may be someone like him at the opposite shore, also longing for the other side.

### Directors' biographies

Mukhtar Shehata was born in Minyat al-Murshid, Egypt, in 1974. He lives in Al-Mandara, Alexandria on the poorer side of the Abu Qir railroad and works as a schoolteacher at Abu Kharouf prep school. He has published one novel, *Lâ li al-Iskandariyya* (No to Alexandria), Cairo: Arabesque, 2010, and a number of colloquial poems online.

Samuli Schielke was born in Helsinki, Finland, in 1972. He lives in Berlin where he works as a social anthropologist at Zentrum Moderner Orient. He has published several articles about everyday life in Egypt, and co-directed with Daniela Swarowsky the documentary film *Messages from Paradise #1, Egypt:Austria, About the Permanent Longing for Elsewhere*.



## Technical information and credits

Length: 8 min.

Format: DV/DVD

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Year of production: 2010

Country of production: Egypt and the Netherlands

Language: Arabic

Subtitles: English

### Cast:

The girl: Omaima Mukhtar Shehata

The hero: Mukhtar Saad Shehata

The father: Kamal Aly

The journalist: Samuli Schielke

The woman: Aliaa Elgready

The bystander: Amr El-Sabbagh

The other: Guido de Groot

Script: Mukhtar Saad Shehata

Camera and sound: Samuli Schielke

Camera assistance in the Netherlands: Nadja Solari

Editing: Arthur Bueno, Jennifer Peterson, Samuli Schielke

Post-production: Arthur Bueno

Produced by Daniela Swarowsky

Directed by Mukhtar Saad Shehata and Samuli Schielke

The song 'El-Ghurba' by Ismail El-Ballisi

### Thanks to:

Jakob Lindfors, Abdallah Daif, Abir Hosni, Sherif Awad, Muhammad Saad Shehata, Abd el-Fattah Saad Shehata, Hegazy Saad Shehata, Natalie Kolbe, Daniel Stoevesandt, Darek Zajac, Daniele Cantini, Café el-Joker, Al-hagg Anwar's Ful and Falafel restaurant, the patriotic lady in Mandara.

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