Social Inclusion
Open Access Journal | ISSN: 2183-2803
Volume 8, Issue 4 (2020)

Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe

Editors

Kolar Aparna, Joris Schapendonk and Cesar Merlín-Escorza

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion, 2020, Volume 8, Issue 4
Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe

Published by Cogitatio Press
Rua Fialho de Almeida 14, 2º Esq.,
1070-129 Lisbon
Portugal

Academic Editors
Kolar Aparna (Radboud University, The Netherlands)
Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, The Netherlands)
Cesar Merlín-Escorza (Radboud University, The Netherlands)

Available online at: www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion

Table of Contents

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2020, Volume 8, Issue 4, Pages 110–115
DOI: 10.17645/si.v8i4.3741

Editorial

Method as Border: Tuning in to the Cacophony of Academic Backstages of Migration, Mobility and Border Studies

Kolar Aparna [1,*], Joris Schapendonk [1] and Cesar Merlín-Escorza [1,2]

[1] Geography, Planning, Environment Department, Institute for Management Research, Radboud University, 6525 Nijmegen, The Netherlands; E-Mail: k.kolaraparna@fm.ru.nl (K.A.), j.schapendonk@fm.ru.nl (J.S.), c.merlinescorza@fm.ru.nl (C.M.-E.)
[2] Anthropology and Development Studies Department, Radboud University, 6525 Nijmegen, The Netherlands

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 12 October 2020 | Published: 19 November 2020

Abstract
This thematic issue is a collection of articles reflecting on methods as border devices of hierarchical inclusion spanning migration, mobility and border studies. It maps some key concerns and responses emerging from what we call academic backstages of migration, mobility and border research by younger academics. These concerns are around (dis)entangling positions beyond Us/Them (i.e. researcher/researched), delinking from the spectacle of migration and deviating from the categories of migration apparatuses. While these concerns are not new in themselves the articles however situate these broader concerns shaping migration, mobility and border studies within specific contexts, dilemmas, choices, doubts, tactics and unresolved paradoxes of doing fieldwork. The aim of this thematic issue is not to prescribe "best methods" but in fact to make space for un-masking practices of methods as unfinished processes that are politically and ethically charged, while nevertheless shedding light in (re)new(ed) directions urgent for migration, mobility and border studies. Such an ambition is inevitably partial and situated, rather than comprehensive and all-encompassing. The majority of the contributions then enact and suggest different modes of reflexivity, ranging from reflexive inversion, critical complicity, collective self-inquiry, and reflexive ethnography of emotions, while other contributions elaborate shifts in research questions and processes based on failures, and doubts emerging during fieldwork. We invite the readers to then read the contributions against one another as a practice of attuning to what we call a 'cacophony of academic backstages,' or in other words, to the ways in which methods are never settled while calling attention to the politics of knowledge production unfolding in everyday fieldwork practices.

Keywords
backstage; borders; methods; migration; mobility; politics of knowledge, reflexivity

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe" edited by Kolar Aparna (Radboud University, The Netherlands), Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, The Netherlands) and Cesar Merlín-Escorza (Radboud University, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction: Borders, Methods and the Academic Backstage

In their book, *Border as Method*, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013, p. 7) argue that "borders are devices of inclusion that select and filter people and different forms of circulation in ways no less violent than those deployed in exclusionary measures." In this thematic issue we are interested in how such devices entangle with the methods employed by researchers engaged in migration, mobility and border studies. The concept of 'method as border,' then, serves as a lens to bring attention to the shifting positionalities emerging in relation to the shifting mutations of migration and border regimes ques-

tioning the very foundations and assumptions of conventional disciplinary methods underpinning research. The foundation for this thematic issue emerged from intensive discussions at the Nijmegen Centre of Border Research, where all three authors of this editorial are based. Speaking from different positionalities—in terms of the personal experiences we have, academic positions we hold, the debates we participate in—we have increasingly felt the need to actively create spaces for collective conversations that are often uncomfortable, as we question our own methods and academic practices. We do so in an academic context that produces its own anxieties based on ranking systems and competition (Berg, Huijbens, & Larsen, 2016), where such a collective space for doubt and discomfort is shrinking. But this also needs to be seen in light of the anxieties emerging from doing migration, mobility and border research in Europe and the privileges and blind spots this entails. This thematic issue began with a collective question: How do (younger) academics make sense of the financialization, over-politicization and hyper-relevance of migration, mobility and border research in their choice of methods?

With this thematic issue we aim to create a critical space for reflection on our positions and methods. We call this space the *academic backstage* for two reasons. First, it is a space from where we articulate some of the invisible labour, hidden choices of location, objects of inquiry, scales, alongside ambivalences and shifts behind our academic positions and performances as migration mobility and border researchers situated in a wider sociopolitical climate. Like artists look at themselves in the mirror as they wait backstage, we invite migration, mobility and border scholars to do the same; to stand still and critically re-look, to (dis/re)engage, or deviate from the grant proposals, dominant academic practices, and value positions one is trained in or expected to demonstrate expertise on, especially in a global context of rat-racing for grants and pumping out publications.

As stated by Grönfors (1982), this is (still) needed:

> By being scientific the social scientist has been able to divert attention away from the real person—him/herself—towards an esoteric and invisible community of scientists from which his or her lead is taken, but which, like God, can never be called upon to justify its position.

While researchers are being called upon to clarify their outcomes as part of funding regimes and promotional structures of university systems, we are held less accountable to our own messy role in the messy processes of re-*search*-ing in a field that is itself highly politicized. Here, indeed, shifting positions emerging in relation to encounters, or processes of being called upon to justify one's position from non-academic actors, or one's own moral dilemmas from intuitive and ongoing questions of learning and unlearning one's privileges and blind spots along the way, are urgent. Only when we move away from the spotlight and god-like status are we able to ask ourselves fundamental questions: Where do we put our analytical gaze? With whom do we speak? Whose knowledges should be central? Where do we go, and for what reasons?

Secondly, this backstage allows us to revisit certain methods and normalised 'objects of inquiry' as (potentially) feeding into border regimes and migration apparatuses, regardless of consciously choosing to do so or not, that we believe needs critical reflection. Here we invite early stage academics to share tactics they adopt in shifting the gaze away from the spectacle and adopting reflexive methods to avoid reproducing the design principles of migration apparatuses and border regimes in one's own research designs.

With these two dimensions (questions regarding one's position in a wider socio-political field of struggles over what knowledges come to matter and why, and the direct links between academic work and border devices) we seek to discuss what is included/excluded and visible/invisible in and through our everyday academic work, with the purpose of starting a collective conversation; to learn from each other's doubts, questions, struggles, discomforts and failures, rather than solely from successes and 'products of ideas.' This introduction elaborates on the two dimensions of the academic backstage. The contributions to this issue are discussed along the way.

2. Academic Backstage I: (Dis)entangling Positions beyond Us/Them

First, behind every academic performance—behind every smooth argument, funded proposal, methodological design—there are uncertainties, nerves and preparations that we seldom make visible in our frontstage performances. The first backstage reflection this thematic issue provides speaks to these personal positions. To articulate this, we outline our own differential positions to start these collective conversations. From his stable academic position (assistant professorship, long-term contract), author Joris Schapendonk started to unpack his personal ambivalences regarding his work of the last decade that concentrated on migrant trajectories. While his methods of following trajectories can be regarded an academic success (as it resonates in others' work), he increasingly feels uncomfortable with this approach too and/or how it is framed by colleagues. Despite its methodological strength—it helps to unfreeze migrant positionality and seeks to contribute to the de-migranticization of migration studies (Dahinden, 2016)—this approach risks to reinforce the over-politicized view on migration processes, rather than creating an intellectual escape route.

Author Kolar Aparna's recently defended PhD thesis emerged from uncomfortable conversations she had with many people waiting for their citizenship-papers across EU states (Aparna, 2020). These conversations

were uncomfortable because it was regarding her role in their collective struggles for intellectual valuation in asylum centres and camps and right to education, among others. This is related to her emerging discomfort with academic practices that fragment—fragment theoretical abstraction from lived, embodied struggles and stories; fragment researcher from researched; fragment 'university' from 'the field.' She chose to move away from speaking *about* or *with* 'asylum-seekers,' or borders that 'they' face, to speaking *from* asylum as a condition of enacting a politics of citizenship in everyday relations, produced at the intersections of academic/-refugee practices. This indeed opened up spontaneously chosen methods to articulate related conditions of borders from different positionalities of enacting asylum. These ranged from collective auto-ethnography, montaging, focus groups, workshops for developing curricula etc, in relation to the purpose of keeping classroom doors, syllabus and publication practices open for critique, co-production and co-authorship. The topics emerged along various directions urgent for collective struggles of opening up the university to communities otherwise excluded, right to education, and intellectual valuation in camps and asylum centres. However, the unequal income between her and some of her co-authors, not hired by universities and not recognized as citizens in Europe, continues to reinforce the unequal conditions of knowledge exchange. Also, the equally important struggles to build a curriculum that speaks to diverse subject positions across imperial divides remains an uphill struggle, given her own precarious academic position as a post-doc with a temporary contract.

Although already aware of many of the contradictions of the creation, legitimation and practice of scientific knowledge, author Cesar E. Merlín-Escorza's recent engagement in ethnographic research and academic performance related to migrant and refuged individuals have motivated him to question the purpose and means of this kind of work. Now in his second year as a PhD candidate at the geography and anthropology departments, he has come to scrutinize research and teaching practices departing from collective experiences and the latest developments in his research project, in particular in relation to the COVID-19 global pandemic. In such a context, the uncertainty of (not) being able to travel outside Europe to work in the field, helped him question his choices regarding the setting and groups of individuals in his study, and the relation between these and his position in the world. In conversation with other (young) researchers located at universities in the Global South and North, whilst trying to build more critical research designs, he has found in decolonial streams of thought and practice, the possibilities for 'doing a job' that gives priority to wealth redistribution and social justice.

With our focus on the backstage of academia, we want to make these concerns, shifts and (self)doubts that cross-cut academic positions insightful, in order to unpack some of the emotional labour, power asymmetries and political dilemmas in the process of 'staging' our research. In this issue, Lems (2020), for instance, confronts the dominant concerns of the ethnographic research traditions she is trained in, of "empathy," and of "lending marginalized people a voice" (p. 116). Lems reflects on encounters with her research participants, in this case a group of 'refugee youth' in Switzerland, who challenged her assumptions of 'participation' (in using methods of participatory observation) by refusing to tell their stories, while shifting her research gaze to examine opaque yet violent acts of boundary drawing in everyday relations of refugee support and care.

Wajsberg (2020), rather than driven by empathy in ethnographic research, centres on the emotion of fatigue as an analytical object and a methodological tool to engage in reflexive ethnography with the purpose of investigating the uneven power geometries of research relations in what she calls "Europe's migration control field" (p. 126). By taking the reader through different scenes that entangle research fatigue, compassion fatigue and racial battle fatigue, she draws our attention to the uneven emotional geographies of migration control that researchers move in, and also in turn shape.

3. Academic Backstage II: Delinking from the 'Spectacle,' Deviating from Categories of 'Migration Apparatuses'

All the contributions to this thematic issue explicitly incorporate the politics of relationality between methods as devices of hierarchical inclusion across research and bordering practices. In so doing, this thematic issue discusses a range of *doings* that all speak to the way methods become highly political artefacts and how research designs reflect a wider politics of knowledge production (Aparna, 2020; Chimni, 1998). We do not depart from empirical projects that share a particular focus—be it the migrant, the border guard, the border regime—but invite reflections across subject positions, objects of inquiry and methodological traditions.

In the field of migration and border studies, it is convincingly argued that much of the way questions are raised, project objectives phrased, research subjects selected and empirical insights collected, is closely entangled with the quest of migration regimes, and most notably nation-states, to manage migration better. Dahinden (2016), for instance, outlines how 'migration' and 'migration related categories' are actually artefacts of migration apparatuses. When researchers uncritically follow these labels with their research questions, they contribute to a discursive normalization of difference (see also Giglioli, Hawthorne, & Tiberio, 2017). Hence, Dahinden (2016) urges researchers to disentangle their concepts and categories from nation-state agendas, and instead work more closely with the study of social processes at large related to the topic at hand.

One of the escape routes to break with the normalized discourse of powerful regimes is to use a mobili-

ty framework instead of a migration framework. In this sense, as argued by Davidson (2020) and Schapendonk, Bolay, and Dahinden (2020), mobility studies can be seen as a radical project for breaking with the sedentary tradition of social science and pre-fixed categories of difference often reproduced in migration studies, such as migrant versus citizen. This means that mobility is seen as a fundamental aspect of life, and from this starting point we may consider approaches of what it means to be mobile, and how this is defined in various contexts. With the mobilities approach, we can analyse when, where, how and whose mobilities and stasis is denied, exceptionalized and migranticized, and through which practices this occurs (Schapendonk, 2020). Rather than taking migrancy as a marker of difference (Schapendonk et al., 2020), or taking terms like citizen/migrant as fixed, static categories, this approach invites is to critically reflect and redefine our terms and categories of analysis. However, mobilities studies have become a frontstage in themselves, a 'trend'/'turn,' bypassing some of the politics and practices behind the methods applied.

The contribution by Boas, Schapendonk, Blondin, and Pas (2020) to this thematic issue is a collective reflection on mobile methods. They reflect on the paradoxes of deviating from the sedentary research designs driving mobility studies, the messiness in choices in doing so and the dilemmas around articulating and transcending difference between researchers and participants through mobile methodologies. Reflections on fieldwork encounters that destabilize the researcher's gaze seeking 'spectacular sites of crossings' and 'mundaneness in daily pathways,' lays bare the borderline-imaginaries continuing to haunt mobility frames. It is also reflected in this contribution that the urge to 'move with' actors pre-identified as, for instance, 'environmental migrants' or 'pastoralists,' hides more than it reveals regarding the temporal dimensions, complex connections and fragmented forms of mobilities in relation to gradual environmental changes. Centring one's own embodied experiences of mobility and reflecting on one's motility (mobility potential) in 'the field,' rather than solely the 'other's,' is reflected as having potential to *know* uneven geographies of mobility through kinaesthetic and sensual dimensions. The collective reflections in the article leave us with some fundamental unresolved issues haunting methods based on mobile ontologies of social phenomenon, namely: Why capture the Other's mobility? Who writes about whose mobility? Which frame is given to someone's mobility and why do so? What does consent mean in a context of shifting conditions and precarity of the 'researched'? Yet the authors urge for a focus on the importance of mobile methodologies in analysing practices of mobility as shaping research relations and, therefore, also unequal relations of mobility and immobility otherwise hidden, rather than the elusive goal of representing 'the Other's' (im)mobility experiences.

Although this mobility approach seeks to address (in its own way) an ontology of separation (e.g., Naylor, Daigle, Zaragocin, Ramírez, & Gilmartin, 2018), the extractive and exclusionary dynamics of migration research reproducing unequal research relations remains implicit. Bass, Cordova, and Teunissen (2020) reflect on how discriminatory practices of so-called 'migration scholars' can be explained as traces of the "imperial eyes" through which academia legitimizes such dynamics. As early stage researchers they are influenced by scholars working with the autonomy of migration, liberation theory, critical perspectives of indigenous peoples/individuals and those working on the frontlines. From this mixed source of inspiration, Bass et al. (2020) invite us to question our methods and approaches by providing a set of tools which could be applied by researchers not only inside but also outside academic structures. Motivated by their shared *affinities* rather than disciplinary or methodological concerns, the authors find in the "collective process of self-inquiry" (Bass et al., 2020, p. 150), a path to delink from the individualistic tendency of academic work. By analysing the concomitance between their positionalities, privileges and the discriminatory practices developed at all times in the research process, they re-centre such analysis as core to migration research. Just as the invitation remains open, the complexity of such a challenge remains evident, for the achievement of a liberatory academic practice encompassing a diversity of ways-of-doing represents an ongoing struggle "towards the undercommons" (Bass et al., 2020, p. 154) as an unfinished project.

Such tools of collective self-inquiry are but one among others to avoid becoming non-reflexive systems designers. In this regard, attention to politics of location in research on EU borders is raised from two different angles. Behind the frontstage of bordering, such as camps and hotspots and detention sites, Pollozeck (2020) argues, is the 'elsewhere,' such as in databases of Eurodoc or headquarters of Frontex and Europol. With the physical camp Moria burnt down during the time of writing this introduction, Pollozeck's article remains witness to the camp's ongoing social life as a 'logistical set-up,' where data is generated and spread across state institutions. Bordering, it is argued, is most importantly a sociotechnical and socio-material phenomenon, from a praxeographic approach. However, rather than the assumed collaborative forms of knowledge production underpinning praxeographic mapping, disentangling the opaque institutional ecologies of migration and border control for making new associations, especially of the Moria hotspot, he argues, can enable forging new alliances and creating new collectives outside academia, such as those focusing on data protection and data monitoring.

Along similar lines, Kristensen (2020) urges us to rethink the complicity of researchers in reproducing the drama of the 'migration industry,' based on her research conducted among EU border enforcement officials. Rather than critical distance, she urges scholars to nurture the capacity of critical complicity. Such a practice, she argues, can unfold at three levels, namely 1) by

assessing the locations of fieldwork and the ways they either mirror or distort dominant narratives about the borders of Europe, 2) probing into differences and similarities between objects of inquiry of interlocutor and researcher, and, finally, 3) re-routing the aim of ethnography as additions rather than evidence or revelations.

4. Tuning-In to the Cacophony of Academic Backstages

With this issue we thus address the way migration, mobilities and border research is itself part of a moving sociopolitical context that directs and affects our research questions, methods and practices. This also makes it hard to claim centre stage as academics in a field where knowledges are claimed by multiple actors, regimes and institutional practices. This thematic issue is a call to tune our senses collectively to the cacophony of voices emerging in the wings of 'academic backstages' in response to these politics of 'claiming' intellectual space in what Wajsberg (2020) calls "Europe's migration control field" (p. 126). The term cacophony is used because this inevitably implies discordant views, rather than singularly coherent voices flying the same flag of methods. It implies tuning our senses to cacophonic rhythms that, when rubbed against each other, or collide with each other, produce ripple effects beyond territorial camps of methods. This thematic issue itself is such a cacophonical rhythm-space. Such an evolving architecture of cacophonical backstages of academic practice demands a stubborn insistence on practices of sharing doubts, and acknowledging failures, complicities, and affinities. At the same time, it also implies being collectively accountable to acts of producing inequalities, similarities and difference, extraction and transformation, inclusion and exclusion, in ways that reject the self-confident individualised templates dictated by funding regimes and managerial tools governing academic thought.

The backstage space of this issue is, then, an invitation to the reader to tune-in to the cacophony emerging from the dizzying conversations towards the 'undercommons,' the dry vocabulary of praxeographic approaches, the shaky tones of fatigue, the sobering forms of unlearning and admitting privilege, bias and fallacies, and the meticulous layers of critical complicity, among all the many shades these writings and this collection of articles might induce in the reader.

We urge for a shaking up of the monotonal complacency in the academic fields of migration, mobility and border studies, which is full of writing ever more *about* borders, and/or migrants. More knowledge, more details, can lead to more closures and further oppression of the already oppressed (Khosravi, 2018). As a consequence of the researcher's ambition for new and creative knowledge, scientific methods and writing can expose the clandestine necessity of certain migration pathways and practices. By creating more knowledge or a better understanding regarding unauthorised mobilities within migration regimes, stakeholders of control and containment, namely State institutions or non-State actors (like organizations profiting from migrant bodies and lives), can better grasp the knowledges and practices developed by the ones dwelling and moving through the cracks of such regimes (Cabot, 2019). Instead, we urge for spaces that speak *from* positions that inevitably implicate the researcher whether one likes it or not and whether one is explicit about this or not, as part of the 'fields of inquiry.' In so doing, rather than constantly separating 'spaces of expertise' (i.e., the University) from the field where the 'grasping' is done or 'data collected' (Aparna, 2020; Glissant, 1997), we urge for re-centring the moments, events, encounters, failures, shifts and transformations that disrupt, re-engage, and re-articulate such relations from various angles. Such an academic backstage is, therefore, not a space to share our academic comforts, but rather to put our finger on our discomforts. It is not a space for new research questions, but a space to question the questions we raise. It is not a ground to learn new research techniques, but rather a ground to unlearn routines. It is not a space for applauding our academic successes, but rather a space to close the curtains of the frontstage and tuning in to the cacophony of academic backstages.

References

Aparna, K. (2020). *Enacting asylum university: Politics of research encounters and (re)producing borders in asylum relations* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

Bass, M. J., Cordova, D., & Teunissen, P. (2020). (Re)searching with imperial eyes: Collective self-inquiry as a tool for transformative migration studies. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 147–156.

Berg, L. D., Huijbens, E. H., & Larsen, H. G. (2016). Producing anxiety in the neoliberal university. *The Canadian Geographer/Le géographe Canadien*, *60*(2), 168–180.

Boas, I., Schapendonk, J., Blondin, S., & Pas, A. (2020). Methods as moving ground: Reflections on the 'doings' of mobile methodologies. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 136–146.

Cabot, H. (2019). The business of anthropology and the European refugee regime. *American Ethnologist*, *46*(3), 261–275.

Chimni, B. S. (1998). The geopolitics of refugee studies: A view from the South. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *11*(4), 350–374.

Dahinden, J. (2016). A plea for the 'de-migranticization' of research on migration and integration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *39*(13), 2207–2225.

Davidson, A. C. (2020). Radical mobilities. *Progress in Human Geography*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0309132519899472

Giglioli, I., Hawthorne, C., & Tiberio, A. (2017). Introduction. *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa*, *2017*(3), 335–338. https://doi.org/10.3240/88709

Glissant, É. (1997). *Poetics of relation*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Grönfors, M. (1982). From scientific social science to responsible research: The lesson of the Finnish Gypsies. *Acta Sociologica*, *25*(3), 249–257.

Khosravi, S. (2018). Afterword. Experiences and stories along the way. *Geoforum*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.05.021

Kristensen, M. P. (2020). EU border officials and critical analysis: The politics of location and ethnographic knowledge as addition. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 169–177.

Lems, A. (2020). Phenomenology of exclusion: Capturing the everyday thresholds of belonging. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 116–125.

Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013). *Border as method, or the multiplication of labor*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Naylor, L., Daigle, M., Zaragocin, S., Ramírez, M. M., & Gilmartin, M. (2018). Interventions: Bringing the decolonial to political geography. *Political Geography*, *66*, 199–209.

Pollozeck, S. (2020). Mapping European border control: On small maps, reflexive inversion and interference. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 157–168.

Schapendonk, J. (2020). *Finding ways through Eurospace: West African movers re-viewing Europe from the inside* (Vol. 7). New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

Schapendonk, J., Bolay, M., & Dahinden, J. (2020). The conceptual limits of the 'migration journey.' De-exceptionalising mobility in the context of West African trajectories. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1804191

Wajsberg, M. (2020). Following fatigue, feeling fatigue: A reflexive ethnography of emotion. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 126–135.

About the Authors

Kolar Aparna is a mother of a 4-year-old and has a background in Performing Arts and Human Geography. Based on collective action-research processes, her PhD thesis calls attention to the borders of academic practices that entangle with borders in everyday asylum support practices. She is currently working as Assistant Professor in the Human Geography department at Radboud University.

Joris Schapendonk is Assistant Professor at the Geography, Planning and Environment department of Radboud University and an active member of Nijmegen Centre for Border Research (NCBR). His research concentrates on im/mobility trajectories, borders and migration industries. His work is published in, among others, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (2014), *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2018; 2020) and *Geoforum* (2018). His latest book, *Finding Ways in Eurospace* (2020), is published by Berghahn Books (https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/SchapendonkFinding)

Cesar Merlín-Escorza was born in México Distrito Federal in 1985. At 21 he migrated to the United States and worked there for three years, learning from the experiences with/of "illegal" immigrant workers. At 24 he began studying Social Anthropology at UAM—Iztapalapa in México, researching about transnational identities. In 2017 he migrated to The Netherlands to do a master in anthropology at Radboud University and continued with the PhD, researching about the discourses and performativities in sheltering practices.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2020, Volume 8, Issue 4, Pages 116–125
DOI: 10.17645/si.v8i4.3282

Article

Phenomenology of Exclusion: Capturing the Everyday Thresholds of Belonging

Annika Lems

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, 06114 Halle Saale, Germany; E-Mail: lems@eth.mpg.de

Submitted: 25 May 2020 | Accepted: 8 July 2020 | Published: 19 November 2020

Abstract
In this article I critically interrogate the ways researchers produce knowledge about the making and unmaking of borders. I do so by focusing on social processes of boundary-drawing that have dramatically intensified since the 2015 summer of displacements in Europe. I think through some of the methodological possibilities and conundrums that arise if we try to make visible the unarticulated social conventions underlying the everyday thresholds of belonging that determine who is permitted in, and who has to remain outside, the affective socio-political space of societies. By drawing on my own research experiences, I show why methodologies aimed at lending marginalized people a voice often fail to capture the voiceless, silent nature of these boundary-drawing practices. I suggest that in order to bring the invisible barbed wires permeating societies into the open, we need to develop phenomenologies of everyday exclusionary practices, or 'cultures of unwelcome.' Through my ethnographic encounters with marginalized refugee youth and individuals who believe that the influx of refugees is a threat to their values and ways of life, I argue for more nuanced research methodologies that allow us to better capture the everyday social processes underlying acts of boundary-drawing. I suggest that approaching border work as an intersubjective, worldly phenomenon involves paying attention to the experiences of individuals who find themselves pushed to the margins of society, and to those who actively participate in keeping people and groups marked as other locked out.

Keywords
border work; ethnography; exclusion; phenomenology; radicalization; refugee crisis; right-wing activism

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe" edited by Kolar Aparna (Radboud University, The Netherlands), Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, The Netherlands) and Cesar Merlín-Escorza (Radboud University, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of the dramatic intensification of Europe's closed-door policies in recent years, social scientists are struggling to keep pace with the multiple borders they produce. Contrary to dominant explanatory patterns these 'border spectacles' (De Genova, 2013) did not appear out of the blue or as the result of a 'refugee crisis' overwhelming European nation states. They have been in the making at least since the 1990s, when wealthy nation states started to fence themselves off against unwanted migrants from countries struck by poverty and postcolonial conflicts (Chimni, 2000). Yet, the ambiguous nature of border work—"the messy, contested and often intensely social" (Reeves, 2014, p. 6; also see Rumford, 2008) work involved in the making and unmaking of borders—has become particularly visible in the aftermath of the 2015 summer of displacements, when hundreds of thousands of refugees made their way to Europe. The narrative of a refugee crisis threatening the social and cultural order of things in Europe has been used to justify the multiplication of boundary-drawing practices. It has produced highly ambiguous new social realities for migrants and refugees who find their mobility cut short, whilst simultaneously being kept in continuous loops of commotion (Lems, 2019).

The dilemma of how to methodologically approach Europe's "lethal border" regime (Perl, 2018, p. 86) and the paradoxes it produces has gained considerable scholarly attention in recent years. It has instigated important debates about the slipperiness of ethnographic research in continuously fluctuating settings (Schapendonk, 2020), the role of agency and autonomy in migrants' attempts to trick and overcome violent border control mechanisms (De Genova, 2017), and the danger of reinforcing the logic of crisis border regimes operate on through social science research practices (Cabot, 2019; Ramsay, 2019). Importantly, some scholars have pointed out that the ambiguities of contemporary border work cannot be reduced to the geophysical locale of the border (Reeves, 2014; Sossi, 2006). The European Union's tactics of fortressing itself against undesired people has created a situation where migrants are confronted with Europe's borders long before they actually set foot on its territory. I would add that these borders also do not end once refugees and migrants reach European soil. The increased importance of ambiguous social markers such as migrants' 'integration' efforts (Rytter, 2019) show that Europe's geopolitical borders make way for more opaque bordering practices. The borders I am aiming at do not mark out legal or national territories but inner, affectively charged terrains of belonging.

Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy (2018) coined the term 'everyday bordering' to describe how border control practices come to be transferred from the external physical terrain of the border into the internal social domain of everyday life, thereby turning ordinary figures of public life such as teachers or doctors into extended border guards. In conversation with this work, Strasser and Tibet (2020) have noted that while everyday bordering practices cannot be reduced to the locale of the border, they are also not limited to the institutional sphere. Instead, we need to develop the analytical means to assess the ways such practices are anchored in the realm of the everyday and folded into social relationships. What is needed, then, is an epistemological move beyond the strong fixation on policies, legal frameworks and hegemonic discourses that has marked much research on bordering practices. Even though the macro-dynamics fueling border work are undoubtedly of crucial importance, they cannot explain how borders are set up and maintained on a vernacular, social basis.

In this article I will explore some of the methodological possibilities and conundrums that arise if we shift the analytical focus from refugee studies to practices of exclusion. Based on my previous and on-going research, I will show how I have come to the conviction that if we are to gain a more nuanced understanding of the backlash against inclusive ideas of belonging currently sweeping through liberal democracies, we need to pay serious ethnographic attention to the formation, maintenance and defense of what Stoler (2018) describes as 'interior frontiers.' They are the vernacular thresholds of belonging that create unspoken distinctions between self and other, familiar and alien, or inside and outside. What makes interior frontiers so hard to grasp with conventional tools of social science research is the fact that they often do not make themselves apparent through open acts of boundary-drawing (Lamont & Molnar, 2002), but involve boundaries that are drawn in much quieter, less obvious ways. Yet, even though interior frontiers are less visible than external ones, they hold a great degree of power over the lifeworlds of individuals, as they delineate who is allowed in and who is to be kept out of the 'communities of value' (Anderson, 2015) making up the affective socio-political space of societies. The kinds of borders I am aiming at cannot be traversed through official procedures or legally binding documents. Stoler (2018, p. 3) emphasizes that the effectiveness of interior frontiers stems precisely from the fact that they are not delineated by barbed wires, "but by unarticulated and often inaccessible conventions."

In this article I think through the methodological steps it might take to make visible the unarticulated social conventions underwriting interior frontiers. I suggest that in order to bring the invisible barbed wires permeating contemporary European societies into the open, we need to develop phenomenologies of exclusion. Often described as the scientific study of experience, phenomenology aims to understand phenomena from how they are experienced and made sense of in the everyday, prior to theoretical abstraction. By generating theorisations from the lived experiences of particular human beings, phenomenologically oriented ethnographers aim to move beyond monolithic concepts, such as 'the social' or 'the cultural,' and towards the particularity of intersubjective, everyday processes of meaning-making (Lems, 2018). Adopting a phenomenological approach is to "declare an intellectual commitment to engage directly with lived situations, in all their empirical diversity, intersubjective complexity and open-endedness" (Jackson, 2019, p. 150). In the context of border methods, it entails turning the focus on the intersubjective dimension of exclusion—to approach it as a lived social phenomenon that cannot be understood detached from the habitual ways people are oriented toward the world. Due to its closeness to people's everyday processes of meaning-making, ethnographic research has a crucial role to play in gaining more nuanced knowledge about the intersubjective nature of border work. However, as I turn to my own research experiences it becomes clear that intersubjectivity should not be misunderstood as a synonym for empathy, harmony or shared experience (Jackson, 1998, p. 4). Approaching border work as an intersubjective, worldly phenomenon involves paying attention to the experiences of both the individuals who find themselves placed outside the interior frontiers of belonging, and those who actively participate in keeping people and groups marked as other locked out. A phenomenological approach to exclusion thus confronts the researcher with a set of ethical and methodological dilemmas that are not easy to overcome.

While there is a long and established tradition in ethnographic research that aims to uncover the experiences or 'voices' of ordinary people, the focus has been mainly on the concerns of marginalized communities or individuals. Propelled by the incentive of democratizing research processes, ideas of friendship and dialogue have turned into guiding principles of ethnographic research endeavours, leading to the implicit assumption that in order to gain access to their informants' experiences, ethnographers need to share their world views (Teitelbaum, 2019). The phenomenological approach to exclusion I aim to sketch in this article destabilizes the ideal of scholar-informant solidarity underwriting the paradigm of voice. Through examples from my ethnographic encounters with both marginalized refugee communities and individuals who actively engage in exclusionary practices, I will sketch some of the problems and pitfalls of research methodologies that aim to uncover participants' voices. In a first step, I will give some insights into the dynamics of my research with unaccompanied refugee youth in Switzerland. I will spell out the traps that researchers might fall into if they uncritically use voice as a methodology to expose the inner workings of border regimes. By drawing on my own research experiences, I will show how ethnographic research methodologies aimed at lending marginalized youth a voice failed to capture the voiceless, silent nature of the interior frontiers the young people found themselves up against. By shedding light on some of the ways these frontiers made themselves noticeable, I will argue for more nuanced research methodologies that allow us to better capture the everyday border work through which certain groups and individuals come to be pushed to the margins of society. In a second step I will show why I believe that this methodological repertoire should also include a more thorough engagement with the experiences, stories and perspectives of people who actively participate in this border work.

2. The Paradox of Voice

My conviction that we have to develop a more versatile repertoire of research methods to be able to better capture the tacit and messy nature of border work did not occur in a theoretical void. The need for a phenomenology of exclusion grew directly from the conversations I had with a group of young refugees who had applied for asylum in Switzerland. All of the young people had arrived in the wake of the 2015 summer of displacements and were categorized as unaccompanied minors. As part of an ethnographic research project I followed the everyday pathways of these eight youth from Eritrea, Guinea and Somalia and their extended circle of friends for close to two years. The project aimed to understand the role of education in young people's migration trajectories and study the possibilities and hurdles they encountered in the Swiss education system. Beside these objectives, my research was driven by an interest in the complex yet profound role of education in the youth's existential strivings for recognition and belonging in an unequal world.

When I designed my research approach I was eager to deploy methods that would enable me to shed light on the young people's own perspectives and experiences—to explore tools that would encourage them to become ethnographers of their own lifeworlds (Oester & Brunner, 2015). My interest in developing such an extended, 'experience-near' (Wikan, 1991) angle on education was partially informed by debates on child-centred approaches in ethnographic youth and childhood studies that urge scholars to recognize young people as important social actors whose perspectives need to be engaged with directly in research (Franks, 2011; James, 2007). It was also informed by the work of refugee research scholars who call for the use of creative and collaborative research tools (Alexandra, 2008; Nunn, 2017; O'Neill, 2011) to overcome homogenizing portrayals of refugees as voiceless, apolitical and ahistorical victims (Malkki, 1996). Against the backdrop of these thoughts, I looked for methods of participatory observation that felt more participatory and less like observation. I was given the opportunity to do so by joining the radio project that Thomas, a social pedagogue, had established in one of the homes for unaccompanied minors in the Canton of Bern. While assisting the pedagogue with the group's activities, I was able to work with the young participants on stories that were aired once a month on an independent youth radio station. Once we had established trustful relationships and the youth had acquainted themselves with my double role as a participant and researcher, I extended our meetings beyond the radio setting. After gaining permission from the school, I also started participating in the reception classes for unaccompanied refugee youth that most of the radio group's participants were attending.

My interest in research methodologies that would make the young refugees' voices heard resonated with the ambitions of Thomas. He had initiated the radio project with the idea that the young people would use the radio stories as a tool for reflecting on the reality of being an unaccompanied minor in Switzerland—an outcome he believed to not just be educative for the young refugees themselves but also for the Swiss audience listening to their stories. Not dissimilar to my own interest in dialogical research tools, Thomas was influenced by narrative youth work approaches. He believed in the emancipatory potential of storytelling and hoped that the radio project would create an arena for the young people to express their voices. As I started to work with the radio group, however, I came to realize that the hopes for personal and societal transformation underlying the paradigm of voice needed critical unpacking. This insight dawned on me during one of our first meetings, when Thomas tried to convince the radio group to participate in an event on the plight of unaccompanied minors organized by a charitable organisation in Bern. His idea was for young people to participate and produce a radio

story reflecting on how Swiss people represented them. When introducing the idea to the group, the reaction was anything but enthusiastic. Jamila, a sixteen-years-old girl from Eritrea, rolled her eyes and sighed. "Oh no, that's boring," she said. I asked her to explain why she thought it was boring: "Always all these refugee stories—in the media and everywhere I go. It's too much." It became clear that the young people did not perceive the public arena the radio project created as a welcome opportunity. Instead, they experienced the pressure to dwell on their personal stories as a further burden, adding yet another expectation to their already heavily monitored lives as dependents of the Swiss state. "I cannot stop and look back," seventeen years-old Thierno from Guinea explained one afternoon, when I prompted him to talk about his migration story. He added: "I come to the radio group because it helps me forget."

When asked to tell their own stories, the young people frequently fell back on rehearsed asylum tales, streamlined to fit with the narratives that Swiss immigration authorities and social workers wanted to hear from them. Given the sense of suspicion the young people were confronted with in the Swiss asylum landscape, where they constantly had to over-perform their deservingness as child refugees, the ability to tell a good and acceptable story of themselves took priority over expressing their intimate stories. The radio pieces we produced were therefore a far cry from the compelling narratives Thomas and I had expected to emerge from the project. The participants found the amount of time and effort required to create a good radio story in a language that was still new to them exhausting, and instead opted for short music-driven pieces that did not require them to talk much. They came to the radio project mainly because it offered a welcome escape from the anxiety and boredom marking daily life in the overcrowded homes. After a few months, the young people lost their interest in producing radio stories altogether. They increasingly started to use the realms of the radio group gatherings to discuss stories they would like to make in the future, rather than actually making them. These discussions about fictional stories evolved into the discussion of themes that were of importance to them in general—and the radio project gradually transformed into a form of hangout space.

At a first glance the radio project did not seem to offer many insights into the young people's lifeworlds. Contrary to my own and Thomas' expectations, it had not instigated a process of personal transformation in the participants, enabling them to voice their innermost thoughts and concerns. Yet, the projects' conversion from a collaborative storytelling endeavour into a more private social space allowed for different, more complex stories to appear. In doing so, the project's failure paradoxically flung open a window to understanding the young people's struggles for emplacement in Swiss society. This insight, however, did not grow magically from the stories the young people produced in the radio project. This window only opened once I scrutinised my assumption that if given a mediating tool the youth would happily speak out about their experiences of displacement. By joining the youth in their everyday routes and routines I learned to decipher their refusal to tell their stories. Rather than uncovering the young people's voices, I came to see the importance of developing ethnographic tools that enable us to detect and examine the voiceless traces violent acts of boundary drawing leave behind in individuals.

3. Capturing the Frontiers of Belonging

In many ways, the young people I worked with were successful border workers in their own right. Driven by the hope for a better future, they had taken life-changing decisions on their own and embarked on extremely challenging journeys at a very young age. The youth were amongst the lucky few who had managed to overcome violent migration control measures, cross the Mediterranean on leaky boats and escape border patrols to make it to Switzerland, one of the wealthiest countries in the world with an excellent public education system. Classified as unaccompanied minors, they enjoyed a special protection status which gave them privileged access to education, housing and legal aid. But when I extended my research focus beyond the radio project, I came to see that the young people did not regard these advantages to be door openers to Swiss society. Instead, they experienced the plethora of expectations directed at them as a continuation of the bordering practices they had been confronted with throughout their migration journeys.

As I accompanied the youths into the refugee reception classes they attended, caught up with them in our weekly radio group meetings or joined them in daily activities, I came to observe their continuous acts of learning and perfecting the social and linguistic codes that would enable them to be recognized as equal by their Swiss counterparts. It included mimicking their expressions, learning when to be quiet in order not to stick out, and internalizing unwritten rules about how to, or not to, move about in public spaces. Yet, I also came to observe how these placemaking efforts were continuously unsettled by the defensive attitude the young people encountered on the side of people who felt that they should not be allowed to lay claim to this place. The outlines of these frontiers of belonging first became visible to me through the interactions I observed in the classroom. As I sat in on lessons in the reception classes the young people went to, I was surprised about the negative, deficit-centred stance the pedagogues showed towards their refugee students, even though most of them self-identified as open-minded and politically progressive educators. Rather than empowering the young people and building on their strengths and motivations, the teachers continuously emphasized their deficiencies, which, they argued, made it impossible for their students to make the jump to mainstream schooling any time soon. While the so-called integration classes the

youth attended presented themselves as inclusive education programs aimed at creating pathways for unaccompanied refugee youth to participate in Swiss society, they created an insurmountable number of obstacles for them (Lems, 2020). These obstacles did not show in the form of open displays of rejection. They were often hidden behind a language of care—for example when teachers argued that in refusing to support excellent students' promotion from the segregated refugee-only class into a secondary school they were protecting them because they were not ready to fully participate in Swiss society, or, when young people who had successfully obtained an apprenticeship were talked out of taking it up on the basis that they were emotionally and academically not ready for such a large commitment. Over time cracks started to appear in the veneer of care. As the vast majority of the students failed to be promoted from the segregated classes into mainstream education, it became increasingly obvious that the state of 'readiness' the teachers aimed for was unachievable.

My conversations with the pedagogues revealed that they were deeply concerned about the question of how European societies were going to deal with the socio-economic consequences of the 'refugee crisis.' They understood their roles as social pedagogues as gatekeepers of Swiss society. Through their pedagogical work they tried to achieve a transformation in the refugee youth that was not just important for their individual futures, but for the future of Swiss society at large. The pedagogues were convinced that their main task was to help the young people integrate into a system of values which, they believed, was deeply alien to them. Yet as I sat in on the lessons it became evident that the process of 'integration' the teachers were aiming at was a one-way street. While it required the full submersion of the young people into Swiss society, it did not require Swiss people to show any flexibility in accommodating the ideas or habits the refugee youth had brought along. The problem with this asymmetrical model of integration is that even if refugees do their best to accept the wishes of their hosts and blend in, this does not preclude the emergence of new barriers. Rytter (2019, p. 688) therefore describes integration as a Sisyphean task: "Actual integration seems to be impossible because there are always new fences to climb and new stones to roll up the mountain.''

Whilst easily overlooked because of their commonplace appearance, I suggest that the conceptions of race and cultural difference reverberating through these everyday acts of boundary-drawing need to be understood as the fundaments and catalysts of interior frontiers. When piercing through the surface of the seemingly benevolent language of care and integration permeating the school settings the young people were moving through, historically ingrained narratives of Swiss cultural supremacy come to the fore (Fischer-Tine & Purtschert, 2015; Schinkel, 2018). They link into a deep-seated fear of *Überfremdung* (over-foreignization), which has molded the country' migration policies from the nineteenth century onwards (Wicker, 2009, p. 26). This fear is based on the discursive construction of the figure of the immoral/undeserving foreigner who is leading a good life at the expense of the Swiss taxpayer (D'Amato, 2012, p. 99). These historical and discursive configurations form the subtext of contemporary integration policies in Switzerland, where the debate has gradually moved from the *right* of refugees and migrants to be included in Swiss society to a *demand* that they must integrate (Piñeiro, 2015, pp. 22–24). What resonates in all these debates is the fear of an imminent crisis: A deep-seated fear that if cultural difference is tolerated, this will inevitably lead to the collapse of Swiss traditions and values and to the disintegration of the country's wealth.

Against the backdrop of this political landscape, the young people I worked with were struggling with a deep and utter feeling of being-out-of-place. This sense of being-out-of-place is not due to the inherent impossibility of belonging refugees have as a result of their experiences of displacement. In a socio-political climate where migrant bodies are marked as problem cases in need of integration, control or expulsion, refugees are actively kept from laying claim to places—they are pushed into a feeling of being-out-of-place. It is precisely these "deep tectonic shifts" in liberal democratic societies that Stoler (2018, p. 1) aims to capture with the analytical metaphor of the interior frontier. Influenced by the work of Fichte and Balibar, she deploys 'interior frontier' as an analytical lens that helps her understand "what sorts of sensibilities get recruited to produce hardening distinctions between who is 'us' and who is constructed as (irrevocably) 'them"' (Stoler, 2018, p. 2). It urges scholars to look for different means of responding to the cementing of inequalities across the world and capture processes of social exclusion that often remain invisible with the methodological tools at hand (Stoler, 2018, p. 1). To bring the phenomenological quality of interior frontiers into the open, it does therefore not suffice to deploy a bird's eye view. Stoler (2018, p. 2) suggests that because of their opaqueness they require a "multiplex optic," which is at once intimate and proximate.

Similarly, the interior frontiers of belonging the refugee youth were up against did not become visible to me by simply giving the youth a chance to release their voices. What makes these frontiers so difficult to grasp with narrative methodologies is that their modus operandi is based on a contingent, non-spoken form of border work. It is therefore often precisely in the silences, muttered utterances, or half-told stories that interior frontiers become visible. It was only after I opened up my methodological repertoire that I was able to take note of the fragmentary and non-linear ways the young people had been sharing their experiences of exclusion all the while. This included the brief moments when the youth reflected on the general feeling of unwelcomeness that they were exposed to in their everyday encounters with Swiss people. It shimmered through the question that Samuel, a seventeen years-old Eritrean posed one after-

noon during a radio group gathering: "Look, I can stay here, and I am happy to work and learn and do everything they [the Swiss] want me to do. But do they really want me here?" And it spoke through the reaction of his friend Meron, who asked me: "It's true, they [the Swiss] don't want us here, right?"

Often, interior frontiers only became graspable through small, intangible actions signalling to the youth that they did not have a right to belong to this place. They included experiences on public transport, when people refused to take a seat next to them, interactions with bus drivers who refused to stop when it was 'only' refugee kids waiting at the village bus station next to the home for unaccompanied minors, or the habitual ways people stared at them when they entered shops or public spaces. These everyday acts of border work hardly ever involved openly exclusionary behaviour. Without ever saying a word, however, they managed to deeply unsettle the young people, replacing the hopeful expectations many of them had attached to their educational opportunities in Switzerland with a hopeless attitude of 'I cannot' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 161). Whilst refusing to be verbalized, such embodied, habitual appearances of exclusion should not be ignored or written off as inconclusive. They reveal something essential about the ways people who do not possess the social, emotional or political capital to turn their experiences into a coherent storyline, make sense of the unequal world they find themselves thrown into.

The ability to render one's experiences into a plot is not self-explanatory. Das (1995, p. 22) argues that for people whose lives are marked by violent events it becomes extremely difficult to formulate the conditions for their suffering. She notes that rather than trying to establish a meaning in suffering, we need to pay attention to the victims' own understandings of the world, which are often accidental, chaotic and contingent in nature. Similarly, a phenomenological approach to exclusion cannot reduce its focus on extracting the agentive voices of the marginalized. It needs to pay serious ethnographic attention to the muted and fragmented experiences that are the outcome of violent border regimes and that may render the idea of speaking up or, indeed, speaking at all, impossible. Regarding such voiceless traces as part and parcel of our methodological repertoire allows glimpses of the opaque power of interior frontiers. They allow us to expose their corporeal character, how they not only determine who or what is to be regarded as external to the polity, but also how they manage to make people *feel* strange. They allow us to show how societal discourses manage to inscribe themselves onto the bodies of individuals and get woven into the fabric of the everyday (Das, 1995, p. 22).

4. Everyday Bricklayers

In my previous research I came to see the grave impact of everyday border work on the lives of young refugees. The interior frontiers they found themselves confronted with did not just affect their movements through public spaces. They formed road blocks to key arenas of future-making, forcing them into desperate existential balancing acts. The general atmosphere of hostility and unwelcome the young refugees were grappling with confronted me with the need to develop methodological tools that would allow me to gain a deeper understanding of the social processes underlying such everyday acts of exclusion. Yet, while exposing the voiceless traces of border work allowed me to shed light on the effects of interior frontiers, this approach did not enable me to understand exclusion in its full intersubjective complexity. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the building blocks and building-practices underlying them, I therefore needed to extend my ethnographic focus yet again. To stay with the conceptual metaphor of the interior frontier, I needed to devote more attention to the everyday practices of its bricklayers.

The research group I am currently heading, *Everyday Histories of Global Change*, aims to do precisely this. I have shifted my empirical focus from refugees to the lifeworlds of people who perceive refugees as a threat to their values and ways of life. I try to establish how people actively participating in everyday border work experience and make sense of notions such as tradition, belonging and estrangement—key building blocks in the creation of interior frontiers. Together with my research team I do so by paying ethnographic attention to genealogies of exclusionary practices in municipalities in the Swiss, Austrian, and Italian Alps, that are characterized by long histories of global interconnection on the one hand, and support for reactionary political movements on the other. Throughout the centuries the German-speaking Alpine region has interchangeably been depicted as Europe's rural, backward periphery or as the last locus of authentic values and traditions. It has been marked by fractious relationships with urban centres of power and a historically engrained opposition to the decisions being ordered from above. By zooming in on the ways the inhabitants of these communities engage with the past, we try to come to a deeper understanding of the role local, everyday engagements with history play in determining who is permitted entrance to, and who is to remain outside of, interior frontiers of belonging. The research group is guided by the question of how people actively negotiate questions of place attachment and belonging, and looks at the social work that local, everyday understandings of history do: When do they become a means for creating social closeness and when are they used to exclude and other individuals and groups? How do local exclusionary readings of the past become woven into the texture of the everyday and normalized?

I am exploring these questions by turning everyday practices of exclusion into explicit objects of inquiry. Based on village ethnographies in regions that are frequently described as heartlands of the European right,

I hope that the project will create a deeper understanding of the bricklayers of interior frontiers—the ordinary people supporting exclusionary ideas on the ground. They are part of a rapidly growing proportion of the population in liberal democratic societies who no longer want to adhere to the rules of the "liberal game" (Illouz, 2017, p. 49), and openly reject its ideals of diversity, tolerance and inclusion. In recent years social scientists have started to pay increased ethnographic attention to these developments by studying right-wing activists and extremist groups such as skinheads, neo-Nazis or religious fundamentalists (Shoshan, 2016; Thorleifsson, 2018). While these studies give important insights into the affective, social and economic dynamics driving political radicalization, we know very little about the lifeworlds of ordinary people enacting exclusionary ideas on the ground. A growing number of scholars therefore emphasize the urgent need for more ethnographic studies on the social worlds of people who are not members of radical right-wing organisations, but form the everyday support base of the backlash against inclusive ideas of belonging (Hann, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Pasieka, 2019). A more thorough understanding of what is driving this backlash is of critical importance, as it might allow us to develop answers to the fragmentation and erosion of trust marking the public realm of democratic societies. With my current research I aim to contribute to this body of knowledge by shedding light on the intersubjective processes underlying everyday boundary work. We do so by exploring the potential of history as a social glue that binds communities together and as a means of excluding others by placing them outside of a shared, communal time.

Village ethnography is a particularly helpful methodological tool for such an undertaking. While frequently portrayed otherwise, rural communities are not internally uniform microcosms. They are dynamic social and physical entities that are marked by many cleavages, ambiguities and internal incoherencies. The different people making up the social fabric of my current research site in the Austrian state of Carinthia therefore do not fit in one uniform mould that can be reduced to labels such as 'right-wing' or 'left-wing.' To understand exclusion as an intersubjective phenomenon I have to actively work with the breaks and ruptures that are part and parcel of village life. This does not just include the experiences of the bricklayers of interior frontiers, but also the perspectives and experiences of village outsiders—often people (migrants and non-migrants alike) who have been silenced or ridiculed as to not disturb the social equilibrium. In treating the village as a site of contested meanings, I can observe from up close how some people end up erecting interior frontiers while others find themselves locked outside of them.

I am still in the midst of my fieldwork, hence it is too early to give detailed ethnographic insights into the lifeworlds of the bricklayers and their counterparts. Instead, I want to use the space of this thematic issue to make a methodological point about the great degree of reflexivity this radical intersubjective approach to exclusion demands from ethnographers. Studying the bricklayers of interior frontiers involves many ethical and methodological challenges. It raises a set of dilemmas that complicate commonly accepted ideas of friendship and voice underwriting ethnographic research practices. What happens when scholars give voice to people like forty-year-old Hubert, whom I met during my fieldwork, who is convinced that if we are to prevent a future in which people like "us" are going to be replaced by Muslim migrants, we need to learn from Hitler and take some drastic decisions? My fieldwork in Carinthia has shown that the reactionary future Hubert hopes for should not be written off as an isolated, extremist derailment of one frustrated individual. His future imaginary links into much wider socio-cultural practices in this rural area that do not imagine the future as a forward movement, but hope, wish and actively work towards a world that resembles authoritarian pasts. The social reproduction of these exclusionary ideas of belonging also appear in the villages' heritage groups (*Traditionsvereine*). These clubs form some of the most crucial pillars of social life—not just in this rural area of Austria, but across the German-speaking Alpine region. Whilst aiming to preserve traditions, many of these clubs carry a strong exclusionary undertone: They aim to defend blood and soil from the socio-cultural infiltration of outsiders, or from the spread of cosmopolitan ideals threatening to destroy their authentic ties to the place. Is there a space in social science research for the members of heritage clubs I collaborate with, who aim for a purified 'indigenous' community of Germanic origin? And what happens to the ideal of democratized research agendas when informants use them to mingle everyday critiques of global capitalism with conspiratorial theories of a *Bevölkerungsaustausch*—the planned replacement of the local population by migrants? If social scientists engage with such extremist world views, do they not risk amplifying them? Given the very real suffering interior frontiers can cause, should excluders be given a voice at all? The phenomenology of exclusion I am suggesting is marked by a great dilemma that can never be fully resolved: While too much closeness to the bricklayers of interior frontiers risks normalizing their exclusionary practices, too little risks overlooking the lived realities propelling their everyday border work.

There are very few methodological guidelines that might help ethnographers work through this dilemma. The lack of research with "unlikeable" (Pasieka, 2019, p. 3) groups can partially be ascribed to the dominance of the voice paradigm in ethnographic research methodologies and researchers' reluctance to engage with political world views they cannot sympathize with. Harding (1991, p. 374) sees this reluctance directly linked to the power of the liberal intellectual tradition in Western academia that has based its self-identification as a modern, progressive force on the portrayal of the figure of the reactionary as the "repugnant cultural other" whose back-

wardness and bigotry places him/her outside the project of modernity. Hage (2017, pp. 7–8) notes that the same liberal tradition has led to a tendency in scholars studying exclusionary practices to focus on the inconsistencies in racists' perspectives. Yet, while they have invested an enormous amount of effort in developing anti-racist critiques, people expressing exclusionary sentiments are quite happy to live with the contradictions and discrepancies they are accused of. Hage therefore suggests that we should approach racism as a practical, lived reality. It means that we need to explore the experiences and lifeworlds of people who actively participate in exclusionary practices. Approaching exclusion as a general "mode of being" (Hage, 2017, p. 13) involves asking difficult questions and engaging with individuals researchers might feel inclined to ignore. It involves following the lead of critical race scholars, who have long called for phenomenological methods that allow us to unravel the ways supremacist and racialized ideas are made and unmade in the everyday (Ahmed, 2007). It involves exploring why a growing percentage of the population come to think that in creating interior frontiers they are not doing anything questionable but simply protecting what makes their lives worth living (Hage, 2017, p. 13).

Despite the challenges such a focus on exclusion as an intersubjective phenomenon might pose, ethnographers do not need to reinvent the methodological wheel. We can build on a robust epistemological tradition that urges us to scrutinize the interplay of proximity and distance in ethnographic research encounters. It calls upon ethnographers to recognize that they are always embedded in the social processes they study, necessitating continuous balancing acts between states of closeness and distance. Empathy for our participants' struggles therefore does not have to equal sympathy with their political world views. The challenge of navigating this back and forth between states of closeness and distance has been present in all my ethnographic encounters. It has been as important in my research with refugees—for example, when Somalis in Australia I had established close ties with openly expressed their hatred for people from rival ethnic clans, or when young West African men in Switzerland who treated me like a family member simultaneously argued for the erasure of women from public life—as it is in my current village ethnography. By taking the interplay of proximity and distance seriously, we can navigate some of these challenges and overcome the danger of representing bricklayers of interior frontiers as "repugnant cultural others" (Harding, 1991) or "strangers emerging from our midst" (Illouz, 2017, p. 49). In doing so, I believe that ethnographers cannot just play an essential role in understanding the motives and causes of exclusionary practices. They can contribute to the search for a cure against the sense of discontent afflicting contemporary democracies—a fundamental erosion of trust which increasingly makes conversations across ideological divides impossible.

5. Conclusion

In calling for a phenomenology of exclusion, I do not intend to downplay the actions of people expressing exclusionary sentiments, or, even worse, the suffering caused in the people these sentiments are directed at. As I have tried to show in this article, by using the conceptual metaphor of the interior frontier such an approach cannot but be multidimensional. Given the impalpable, hidden ways interior frontiers are erected and defended in everyday life, and the grave impact they have on current politics of belonging, it is of immense importance to expose them as existing as real social actualities. Treating exclusion as a worldly phenomenon has a number of methodological implications. It means that ethnographers need to critically reflect on the impulse to "do good" (Fisher, 1997) through their research practices and on the paradoxes of voice this creates. It simultaneously implicates resisting the urge to explain away exclusionary cultural practices by reducing them to the effects of global processes of marginalization (Pasieka, 2019, p. 5). A phenomenology of exclusion is based on the idea that we cannot formulate a critique of border work without properly understanding its modus operandi first. It simultaneously puts the ethnographic spotlight on the people who habitually and unquestioningly inhabit a mode of being-at-home-in-the-world and those who are continuously stopped, blocked or held back from occupying this affective space. Not overhearing or silencing such intertwined experiences requires efforts on the side of the ethnographer. It requires us not to expect people to distill their experiences solely in the form of narratives or 'voices,' but to sharpen our perception to other forms of communication. It requires a methodological openness towards 'minima ethnographica' (Jackson, 1998)—the small, seemingly banal modes of being determining people's everyday engagements with the world. It is important not to romanticize these everyday acts of meaning-making and misinterpret them as demonstrations of simplistic, self-contained expressions of agency or voice. By shedding light on the details of life as lived and experienced by particular individuals and groups at particular moments in time, a phenomenology of exclusion is able to show the limitations of an overly enthusiastic emphasis on the potentially emancipatory role of voice as a research tool. Instead, it unveils the 'banality of evil' (Arendt, 1963/2006)—how violent acts of boundary-drawing are often not the result of dramatic, extraordinary acts of exclusion but anchored and acted out in the course of daily life.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation under Grant 10001A_156476 as well as by the Max Planck Society's funding scheme for independent research groups.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory*, *8*(2), 149–168.

Alexandra, D. (2008). Digital storytelling as transformative practice: Critical analysis and creative expression in the representation of migration in Ireland. *Journal of Media Practice*, *9*(2), 101–112.

Anderson, B. (2015). *Us and them? The dangerous politics of immigration control*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Arendt, H. (2006). *Eichmann in Jersualem: A report on the banality of evil*. London and New York, NY: Penguin. (Original work published 1963)

Cabot, H. (2019). The business of anthropology and the European refugee regime. *American Ethnologist*, *46*(3), 261–275.

Chimni, B. S. (2000). Globalization, humanitarianism and the erosion of refugee protection. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *13*(3), 243–263.

D'Amato, G. (2012). Jenseits der Integrationspolitik als politisches Ritual? [Beyond integration policy as a political ritual?]. In J. Hangartner, U. Hostettler, A. Sieber Egger, & A. Wehrli (Eds.), *Alltag und Ritual: Statusübergänge und Ritualisierungen in sozialen und politischen Feldern. Festschrift zu Ehren von Hans-Rudolf Wicker* [The everyday and ritual: Status transitions and ritualisations in social and political fields. Festschrift in honor of Hans-Rudolf-Wicker] (pp. 87–105). Zürich: Seismo.

Das, V. (1995). *Critical events: An anthropological perspective on contemporary India*. Delhi and New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

De Genova, N. (2013). Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': The scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *36*(7), 1180–1198.

De Genova, N. (Ed.). (2017). *The borders of Europe: Autonomy of migration, tactics of bordering*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Fischer-Tine, H., & Purtschert, P. (Eds.). (2015). *Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking colonialism from the margins*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fisher, W. F. (1997). Doing good? The politics and antipolitics of NGO practices. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *26*(1), 439–464.

Franks, M. (2011). Pockets of participation: Revisiting child-centred participation research. *Children & Society*, *25*(1), 15–25.

Hage, G. (2017). *Is racism an environmental threat?* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hann, C. (2016). Overheated underdogs: Civilizational analysis and migration on the Danube-Tisza interfluve. *History and Anthropology*, *27*(5), 602–616.

Harding, S. (1991). Representing fundamentalism: The problem of the repugnant cultural other. *Social Research*, *58*(2), 373–393.

Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right*. New York, NY: New Press.

Illouz, E. (2017). From the paradox of liberation to the demise of liberal elites. In H. Geiselberger (Ed.), *The great regression* (pp. 49–64). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jackson, M. (1998). *Minima ethnographica: Intersubjectivity and the anthropological project*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Jackson, M. (2019). *Critique of identity thinking*. London and New York, NY: Berghahn.

James, A. (2007). Giving voice to children's voices: Practices and problems, pitfalls and potentials. *American Anthropologist*, *109*(2), 261–272.

Lamont, M., & Molnar, V. (2002). The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *28*, 167–195.

Lems, A. (2018). *Being here: Place-making in a world of movement*. London and New York, NY: Berghahn.

Lems, A. (2019). Existential kinetics of movement and stasis: Young Eritrean refugees' thwarted hopes of movement-through-education. *Soumen Anthropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, *44*(2), 59–80.

Lems, A. (2020). Being inside out: The slippery slope between inclusion and exclusion in a Swiss educational project for unaccompanied refugee youth. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(2), 405–422.

Malkki, L. (1996). Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology*, *11*(3), 377–404.

Nunn, C. (2017). Translations-generations: Representing and producing migration generations through arts-based research. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *38*(1), 1–17.

O'Neill, M. (2011). Participatory methods and critical models: Arts, migration and diaspora. *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture*, *2*(1), 13–37.

Oester, K., & Brunner, B. (2015). *Von Kings und Losern: Eine Performance-Ethnografie mit Schülerinnen und Schülern im transnationalisierten Stadtteil Bern West* [Of kings and losers: A performance ethnography with students in the transnationalised suburb Bern West]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Pasieka, A. (2019). Anthropology of the far right: What if we like the 'unlikeable' others? *Anthropology Today*, *35*(1), 3–6.

Perl, G. (2018). Lethal borders and the translocal politics of 'ordinary people.' *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, *27*(2), 85–104.

Piñeiro, E. (2015). *Integration und Abwehr: Genealogie der schweizerischen Ausländerintegration* [Integration and defence: A genealogy of the Swiss integration of foreigners]. Zürich: Seismo.

Ramsay, G. (2019). Time and the other in crisis: How

anthropology makes its displaced object. *Anthropological Theory*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1463499619840464

Reeves, M. (2014). *Border work: Spatial lives of the state in rural central Asia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Rumford, C. (2008). Introduction: Citizens and borderwork in Europe. *Space and Polity*, *12*(1), 1–12.

Rytter, M. (2019). Writing against integration: Danish imaginaries of culture, race and belonging. *Ethnos*, *84*(4), 678–697.

Schapendonk, J. (2020). *Finding ways through Eurospace: West African movers re-viewing Europe from the inside*. London and New York, NY: Berghahn.

Schinkel, W. (2018). Against 'immigrant integration': For an end to neocolonial knowledge production. *Comparative Migration Studies*, *6*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-018-0095-1

Shoshan, N. (2016). *The management of hate: Nation, affect, and the governance of right-wing extremism in Germany*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sossi, F. (2006). *Migrare: Spazi di Confinamento e Strategie di Esistenza* [Migrating: Spaces of confinement and strategies of existence]. Milan: Il Saggiatore.

Stoler, A. L. (2018). Interior frontiers. In J. M. Bernstein, A. Ophir, & A. L. Stoler (Eds.), *Political concepts: A critical lexicon* (pp. 1–13). New York, NY: Fordham University Press. Retrieved from https://www.politicalconcepts.org/interior-frontiers-ann-laura-stoler

Strasser, S., & Tibet, E. E. (2020). The border event in the everyday: Hope and constraints in the lives of young unaccompanied asylum seekers in Turkey. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(2), 354–371.

Teitelbaum, B. R. (2019). Collaborating with the radical right: Scholar-informant solidarity and the case for an immoral anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, *60*(3), 414–435.

Thorleifsson, C. (2018). *Nationalist responses to the crisis in Europe: Old and new hatreds*. London: Routledge.

Wicker, H.-R. (2009). Die neue schweizerische Integrationspolitik [The new Swiss integration policy]. In E. Piñeiro, I. Bopp, & G. Kreis (Eds.), *Fördern und Fordern im Fokus: Leerstellen des schweizerischen Integrationsdiskurses* [Foster and demand: Blank spots of the Swiss integration discourse] (pp. 23–47). Zürich: Seismo.

Wikan, U. (1991). Toward an experience-near anthropology. *Cultural Anthropology*, *6*(3), 285–305.

Yuval-Davis, N., Wemyss, G., & Cassidy, K. (2018). Everyday bordering, belonging and the reorientation of British immigration legislation. *Sociology*, *52*(2), 228–244.

About the Author

Annika Lems is Head of an independent research group at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany. Prior to taking up this position she worked as a Doctoral Research Fellow at Swinburne University in Melbourne, Australia, and as a Lecturer and Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Bern, Switzerland. Her work broadly concerns the ways people experience, negotiate and actively create place attachments in an age of rapid global transformations.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2020, Volume 8, Issue 4, Pages 126–135
DOI: 10.17645/si.v8i4.3394

Article

Following Fatigue, Feeling Fatigue: A Reflexive Ethnography of Emotion

Mirjam Wajsberg

Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, Radboud University, 6525 XZ Nijmegen, The Netherlands;
E-Mail: m.wajsberg@fm.ru.nl

Submitted: 24 June 2020 | Accepted: 28 September 2020 | Published: 19 November 2020

Abstract
This article takes the emotion of fatigue both as its analytical object as well as a methodological tool to engage in a reflexive ethnography, to question the categorical borders of researcher, researched and the field, in the politicised context of migration studies. I do so by drawing on ethnographic material collected during my fieldwork between Athens, Hamburg and Copenhagen in 2019–2020. This article's theoretical and conceptual framing is informed by feminist scholarship on emotions, as well as decolonial scholarship in migration studies. By bringing these theoretical threads into the conversation, I study the different qualities of fatigue, amongst others the collective; how fatigue circulates in and through the ethnographic field; and how it shapes relations between refugees, humanitarian aid workers, activists and researchers such as me. Following fatigue across and through its many different instances in this reflexive ethnography of emotions lays bare the uneven emotional geographies that exist and are (re-)produced in the encounters between actors in Europe's migration control field.

Keywords
emotion; fatigue; methodology; migration; migration studies; reflexive ethnography

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe" edited by Kolar Aparna (Radboud University, The Netherlands), Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, The Netherlands) and Cesar Merlín-Escorza (Radboud University, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction

Following this thematic issue's call to reflect on how methods can reinforce and/or dismantle boundaries within the academic field of migration studies, this article uses the emotion of fatigue as both a methodological tool and an analytical object to argue for an active engagement with emotions in situated ethnographies. This approach has the potential to question and unsettle the roles of researcher and researched, and the idea of the field as a bounded entity more generally.

Conceptually, my approach is inspired by Laliberté and Schurr's (2016) call to (re)-invigorate reflexive practices through a reflexive ethnography of emotions in which the researcher interrogates their own "emotional entanglements" with the 'field.' This enables an enquiry into asymmetrical power relations, questions the ontology of the field and highlights ethical discussions throughout the research process, from ideation and research to writing and dissemination. This call for renewed reflexivity is, I propose, particularly relevant in the field of migration studies because of the increased academic attention to displacement and migration in the wake of the so-called "migration crisis" of 2015 (for discussions of the crisis-framing and particularly the term 'migration crisis' as opposed to other interpretations of and systems in crisis, such as 'asylum reception crisis' or 'political crisis' see Rozakou, 2019, 2020; Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016). While media and political discourses have contributed to framing the arrival of refugees in terms of a crisis, the field of migration studies has benefited from more funding opportunities for research projects on migration and displacement (Cabot, 2019; Rozakou, 2019). The increased scholarly attention, especially since 2015, ironically correlates temporally with further restrictions in migration policies in many European countries that have become

more geared towards the containment, detention and deportation of migrants as well as the criminalisation of humanitarian and logistical aid to refugees (Hänsel, Hess, & Kasparek, 2019; Tazzioli & Garelli, 2018). In light of this politicisation of migration and the continuous undermining of asylum rights in European countries, it is important to reflect on the kind of knowledge that migration research produces (see Cabot, 2019; Rozakou, 2019). As Aparna argues:

> Rather than a neutral position situated 'outside' the field of asylum, the very status of being a researcher entering into spaces of 'refugee-support' or in dialogue with asylum-seekers/refugees or writing about 'their' condition, implies producing relations that are shaped by power relations. (Aparna, 2020, p. 23)

I argue that this research focus on migration and refugees demands a renewed critical engagement with, and questioning of, the power relations between researchers and the communities and individuals they research. This includes questioning the distribution and extraction of resources in research and enquiring into adverse effects such as the potential reification of boundaries of otherness (see also Rozakou, 2019). In this article, the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee' will be used interchangeably. I thereby follow Cantat (2016), who points out that although the state differentiates and assigns different legal categories to these mobilities, the lived mobility experiences share many commonalities.

To constructively address these issues, I propose to take emotions, specifically fatigue, as the starting point to respond to Laliberté and Schurr's (2016) call for reflexive ethnography to elucidate positionality and power relations and unsettle a tendency for the reproduction of othering categories in migration studies. Fatigue, I suggest, is a constitutive element of the emotional geography in which refugees, humanitarian aid workers, activists and migration researchers move in. I understand fatigue as a prolonged emotional state, a kind of tiredness that is not resolved by, for instance, a good night's rest or leisure activities rather than a temporary or physical state of exhaustion. Psychologists describe this emotional fatigue as a loss of motivation to engage with a repetitive object or action, especially when no significant changes result from the repeated engagement (Hockey, 2013). In the following, I examine my own role in the emotional landscape of fatigue. Thus, fatigue is both the object of analysis and the methodological tool for reflexivity and self-examination. As an object of analysis, I draw on three expressions of fatigue: research fatigue, racial battle fatigue and compassion fatigue. As a methodological approach, I attempt to place myself within the emotional geography of the field and thereby translate some of the messiness and tension of doing fieldwork on migration in the 21st century onto these pages.

This article begins by outlining the theoretical ideas around emotions that have been informed by the body of feminist scholarship on the sociality and politics of emotion, specifically Ahmed's (2014) notion circulating emotions as well as Ngai's (2005) "ugly emotions." Afterward, I highlight three different expressions of fatigue: research fatigue, racial battle fatigue and compassion fatigue. I explore these fatigues through ethnographic scenes based on notes taken during my fieldwork conducted for my PhD research in Athens and Hamburg in 2019–2020. My research engages with different forms of migrant-led activism in urban spaces. The scenes outlined in this article are not verbatim accounts, but rather collages, extensive notes and memories based on interviews, informal conversations and encounters in both cities. Lastly, I discuss how the lens of fatigue highlights the importance of reflexive ethnography to unsettle the categorical borders of researcher and researched, and the so-called field in the context of migration studies.

2. Thinking Emotions

My exploration of the emotion of fatigue in its different expressions is informed by feminist scholarship on the sociality of emotions, which emphasises the (re)-productive qualities of emotions in shaping our social and political worlds (see amongst others Berlant, 2004; Bondi, 2005; Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990). I am particularly influenced by Sara Ahmed's (2014) notion of the circulation of emotions. Emotions, Ahmed argues, move within fields of relations where they both acquire meaning, influence meaning and shape interactions. The term 'emotion,' Ahmed points out, already entails the importance of motion (Ahmed, 2014, p. 11). By conceptualising emotions as moving, as circulating, the importance of the spatial relationships between bodies comes into focus. In contrast to other theories of emotion, Ahmed does not make "analytical distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought as if they could be 'experienced' as distinct realms of human 'experience"' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 6). Rather, she emphasises that emotions are located not in the I/We, but in the social interplay between I/We and Other. Thus, emotions are social and political practices rather than individualised, internal states of being (on Ahmed's theory of emotions see Gorton, 2007).

This approach to emotions enables an investigation into how they are imbued with value through historical and social encounters (Ahmed, 2014; Schmitz & Ahmed, 2014). Ahmed illustrates this point with the example of the child and the bear: A child meets a bear; the child has never seen a bear before, yet the child is scared and runs away. Even though this is the child's first encounter with a bear, and although the fear experienced by it is bodily and felt instinctively, the child's fear is also produced through the histories, imaginaries and narratives of the bear as a being to be feared that the child has been exposed to previously. Fear is thus not located in either the child or the bear but occurs in the interaction between the child and the bear. The out-

come of this story, i.e., the child running away from the bear, is however not certain. Ahmed points out that an encounter between either/both a different child and a different bear can lead to another outcome (Ahmed, 2014, p. 7).

This reading of emotions is particularly fruitful to explore the role of feelings in the geographical and relational entanglements that we, in academia, call fieldwork. These moments are experienced by individuals, but they exist within specific historical and socio-political contexts. Through my empirical material, I connect various expressions of fatigue as they are articulated and circulated by different actors such as refugees, activists, aid workers and myself as researcher. Specifically, working with fatigue in the research setting of politicised migration debates in Europe requires active engagement with themes related to power dynamics and racialised hierarchies in knowledge production. Questions arise about who benefits from the researcher's attention, what narratives are clouded when focusing on certain communities and places as opposed to others, and what ideas of the Other are evoked in migration research? These questions are discussed at length in decolonial literature on migration (Aparna, 2020; Aparna, Kande, Kramsch, & Schapendonk, in press; Bejarano, Juárez, García, & Goldstein, 2019; Robbins, 2013; Vanyoro, Hadj-Abdou, & Dempster, 2019), which investigates how new postcolonial configurations of the West that play out in the migration-control field and scholarship engaged with this field. I draw much inspiration from these approaches that attempt to expose the embedded power relations in the financial, historical and socio-political structures of academia that, e.g., create and maintain inequalities. Furthermore, decolonial scholars such as Aparna et al. (in press) argue for developing alternative ways of knowledge production, such as collaborative knowledge production and embodied research. Ahmed's theorisations of emotions tie in well with these decolonial works as they allow to address the relationality of emotions and how these are shaped in a socio-political space.

While Ahmed's theorisations of emotions provide the overarching theoretical framework, I bring in Ngai's (2005) notion of "ugly feelings" to hone in on the specificity of the emotion of fatigue. Ngai explores emotions such as irritation, anxiety or envy that are typically characterised "by a flatness or ongoingness" (Ngai, 2005, p. 7). These characteristics contrast those of other emotions marked by "suddenness" (Ngai, 2005, p. 7), such as anger or joy, which have received more attention in academia and literature. It is this absence of abruptness that allows ugly feelings to linger longer than those more sudden emotions. In my reading, fatigue too can be understood as an ugly feeling, smouldering quietly rather than burning hot and intensely. Fatigue may thus not be immediately visible and marked by a different temporality than the immediacy associated with sudden emotions such as joy and anger. As such, the ugly emotion of fatigue is of particular relevance for a reflexive engagement with the academic field of migration studies that is so often marked by notions of crisis and urgency.

> Scene: On the train from Hamburg to Copenhagen, we stop in the borderlands between Germany and Denmark. Border police enters the train. An announcement over the speaker tells passengers to keep their documents handy for a passport check. I have seen this happen many times in the last years during my frequent travels between Copenhagen and Hamburg. In an attempt to make the border guards' jobs more difficult, I usually make a big deal of not having my passport ready and making them wait. However, this time, the police march immediately through the entire train compartment directly to a Black man sitting in a 4-person booth and two women of colour sitting on the other side of the isle from him. The police aggressively demand to see the man's passport. They ask: "Where are you going? What are you doing in Denmark?" The police's demeanour is intimidating. Once they seem to be done checking the man, they turn around and check the passports of the two women sitting across the aisle. Then they turn to leave to the next train compartment. Now I am furious. I spontaneously get out of my seat and walk up to the police, waving my German passport in my hand. "You haven't checked my passport yet," I say to the police officer standing nearest to me as I shove my passport towards him. He looks puzzled and barely glances at the document. "I thought you are doing a passport check?" I ask exasperatedly, hoping that my tone carries all the subtext I am trying to convey: "I see what you are doing, this is racial profiling, this is part of the Schengen area so why are you checking anyway." The police officer simply replies: "It's a random passport check." "Right…a random check," I answer trying to sound as sarcastic as possible as I turn and walk back to my seat. The other passengers are staring at me trying to figure out what is going on. My hands are shaking now, I am guessing from anger and adrenaline. As soon as I sit back down in my seat, doubts about my act creep up. I spend the rest of the train ride wondering if I did the right thing, if I acted in the interest of the people that were being checked, if I could have made the situation worse for them. I felt compelled to do something, but I don't know if it was the right thing to do.

I recount this event of racial profiling on the train here, not because there was anything unexpected or surprising about its occurrence (see, for example, Schwarz, 2016, who discusses similar events at the Italian–Swiss border); on the contrary, as I will show in the following sections, racial profiling by police is regrettably all too regular an occurrence for Black men in Germany (Bechtel, 2017; Belina, 2016). In this moment on the train, I was moved by fatigues that had accumulated in the previous days and weeks. When the border guards entered

the train that day, I was tired, angry and sad. The incident happened on 20 February 2020, a day after I attended the memorial service for Yaya Djabi, a Gambian man who died in a German prison cell (see Section 4) and only hours after a right-wing extremist murdered nine people at a Shisha bar in a heinous racist attack in Hanau, Germany.

To me, the scene captures the entangled emotions with near- and far-histories of racialisation, police violence, citizenship and borderland geography. However, it also shows how far emotional spaces can reach into each other when the subject-positions are derived from a pervasive inequality within the emotional geography. The accumulative effect of fatigue(s) provoked my impulsive reaction to discrimination, which almost immediately became reflexive of the history of racialisation and current migration control policies that shaped the scene and my position in it. Writing explicitly about my own emotional relations to and in the field, and the ensuing insecurities, is uncomfortable, especially as most of my academic training up to this point has taught me to relegate my own emotions to a small section of the article, the predominant academic product, known as the "methods section." However, it enables reflection on how I, as a researcher, navigate those complicated experiences, relations and expectations and how they are shaped through encounters and differentially experienced histories. More importantly, however, by laying bare these fatigues and my discomfort, I can attempt to challenge the "one-way mirror" (Zuboff, 2019) that researchers often hold up to interlocutors without having to look into the mirror oneself. How much easier is it to explore another person's emotions in writing than addressing one's own? Yet, maybe being able to expose these discomforts can be an entry point into addressing the violence and uneven geographies in which 'the researcher' and 'the researched' move, as suggested by decolonial migration scholarship.

3. Research Fatigue

It was in Athens in early 2019, while participating in an academic workshop on migration in Greece, that I initially heard the term 'research fatigue' used by Greek scholars, activists and residents of informal squats. In the academic literature, research fatigue is understood as feelings of exhaustion and exasperation by communities and individuals who receive sustained attention from researchers, particularly social scientists, and yet have not felt any positive effects from this attention (see Clark, 2008; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013; Way, 2013).

I relate research fatigue to the temporality of crisis that has marked much of the developments in recent migration studies (Cabot, 2019; Rozakou, 2019; Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016). In her article "The Business of Anthropology and the European Refugee Regime," anthropologist Heath Cabot (2019) poignantly argues that the portrayal of migration events in 2015–2016 must be understood as an instance of "crisis chasing," which she describes as "the propensity to take crisis as a driver of scholarship; assuming that 'refugee experiences' need to be studied; and, finally, heeding the call to 'do good' through scholarship in ways that deflect attention from anthropology's own politics of life" (Cabot, 2019, p. 262). It is this propensity for crisis-chasing that has marked much of the research on migration in the social sciences and humanities in recent years, and which raises questions about how, why and for whom this research is conducted. Having myself 'come-of-age' as a student in migration studies in 2015, at precisely the moment when the topic took centre stage of public and political attention in Europe, has also informed my own trajectory as a researcher. My education and nascent career have thus been shaped by the omnipresence of crisis narratives and a resulting surge in academic funding for research on these issues (Cabot, 2019).

> Scene: Lea, Charles, Anne and I are sitting in a café at Victoria Square with Poya, the young man we will interview. We are meeting Poya to talk with him about refugee squats in Athens. He is a resident of City Plaza, one of the most well-known squats in Europe these days. "Are you also anthropologists?" Poya asks, as we settled into our chairs and order our coffees. Some of us are anthropologists, some of us are not, but all of us are in some way working on themes of migration and mobility in Europe. It is obvious that Poya recognises 'our type.' Over the last few years, he has spoken to many researchers, mostly social scientists and journalists, people just like the four of us. Poya's ability to read and immediately place us in a larger socio-political and academic environment leaves me shifting uncomfortably in my seat. A mixture of embarrassment and guilt overcomes me as I am confronted with the fact that I too am part of the ever-growing group of, mostly Northern European, scholars travelling to Greece to conduct yet more research on 'the refugee experience.' My doubts about my role in this environment have been an underlying hum ever since I got a PhD position the previous year. But as I'm sitting across Poya in this café, it rings loudly in my ears.

It is Poya's recognition of 'us as anthropologists' that unsettles me in that moment at the café because it forces me to grapple with my own involvement in this dynamic of crisis-driven research that can engender research fatigue among those individuals and communities that feel no positive change to their circumstances, despite this persistent attention. A similar dynamic between research attention and fatigue also becomes apparent in the case of City Plaza.

In 2016, the former hotel, City Plaza, was squatted in by political activists and turned into a living space for up to 200 people, migrants and activists. City Plaza was radical, hopeful and simultaneously fraught with conflict—

as might be suspected when utopian vision meets everyday reality (see, for example, Mezzadra, 2018; Raimondi, 2019; Squire, 2018). During City Plaza's early days, researchers and journalists were welcomed into the space and community. However, after years of sustained public attention and some harsh critiques, the residents decided not to open the space to researchers or journalists anymore. This decision remained in place until its closure mid-2019. The realities and imaginaries of City Plaza circulated far across the boundaries of the city in activist networks and international media (Crabapple, 2017; Donnerbauer, 2016). City Plaza became a "symbolic location" (Gilroy, 2013). It was a place that researchers flocked to in large numbers and it was the obvious entry point for us as 'newcomers' in Athens and therefore the reason that we were sitting in the café with Poya that afternoon.

Months after my initial meeting with Poya, I asked him how many times he had been interviewed by researchers in the last years. After a long pause, he replied that it must have been more than twenty times. Although I already knew that he had extensive experience with academics, I was nonetheless shocked to learn this. We, researchers, do not only seem to all flock to the same city, the same neighbourhood, and even the same building—City Plaza—but are we also all speaking to the same person in the course of our research? Rozakou (2019) argues that the amount of research into certain focal points such as the Moria refugee camp on Lesvos or City Plaza in Athens alone does not provide an in-depth picture. Rather, the amount of research can be indicative of the accessibility or enabling circumstances around the research production (Rozakou, 2019, p. 68). It raises questions about the quality of knowledge production itself when a symbolic location becomes central to a whole body of literature. However, it also exposes the constitutive elements of research fatigue in that it indicates the extractive propensities of knowledge production where empirical requirements for an academic output are often enabled and collected through a 'single point of access,' after which the 'knowledge-producer' moves on in the script.

While some individuals, such as Poya, and communities in Athens, such as City Plaza, were at the centre of academic interest, other communities and individuals, however, have not necessarily received similar attention:

> Scene: Mamadou and I are sitting in his living room and are talking about political developments in Greece since early 2019. He tells me about how changes to the asylum procedures implemented by the new centre-right government a few months earlier have negatively affected him and his friends. Sometime into our conversation, his new-born child, who has been quietly sleeping next to Mamadou until now, starts to cry and won't be consoled even as Mamadou rocks the child in his arms while he walks around the living room. "I will give him a bath," Mamadou decides and beckons me to follow him to the bathroom. I lean against the doorframe as Mamadou lifts his child into a small basin and carefully pours water over the child's belly. It is the informality of that moment that makes me ask him something that has been burning on my mind since I've returned to Athens: "Are the questions I am asking relevant at all or am I missing something?" "The questions are fine," he says. "I like talking to people from other countries about these things. People should know what is happening to refugees here." It is then that he tells me that I am the first researcher whom he has spoken to about these topics in more than seven years that he has lived in Greece. After my conversations with Poya and all the talk of research fatigue that I've heard over the last months, I am surprised to learn this from Mamadou. I was almost certain that he, as the president of an African diaspora organisation, would have had a similar experience to Poya and been interviewed by researchers repeatedly.

I recall this moment here because, to me, it illustrates the contrast to Poya's experience and the symbolic location of City Plaza that are fatigued by the continued research attention and the lack of real change it has brought to their lives. Yet, what Mamadou expresses is a lack of attention from the 'outside' and a wish to actually be listened to. The examples of Poya and Mamadou highlight the uneven emotional landscape in which attention and inattention create different experiences of research fatigue. It strikes me that, in both instances, the men are enacting citizenship (Isin, 2009) and yet, in both instances, the resulting recognition of rights is never proportionate to the effort, regardless of where the crisis-chasing research is directed. The research attention may create moments of supposed representation (which in itself also raises questions about who is being represented, by whom and for whom), but it seems that research rarely amplifies the activist citizenship of refugees claiming their rights. Unequal distribution of attention, in other words, creates a similar result. Exhaustion can both arise in relation to continued attention by the research community without an experience of concrete, (positive) change and it can present itself in the frustrations experienced by people excluded from it. Moreover, even in documenting and taking notice of this exhaustion, I have to acknowledge my own role in its accumulation as a researcher entering a space that has been at the focal point of attention for the last several years.

4. Racial Battle Fatigue

In the following, I continue to elucidate how fatigue also takes shape as an emotional object through "histories of contact between racialised, gendered, sexualised, and otherwise differentiated bodies" (Laliberté & Schurr, 2016, p. 74). This kind of fatigue is known as "racial battle fatigue," a concept coined by critical race theo-

rist William Smith (2004). The term described the experiences of African American students and faculty at predominantly white universities in the United States and the responses in terms of psychological, bodily and social stress to racism in this institutional setting. Nowadays, the term is also applied to capture similar experiences by other racialised groups and individuals. Racial battle fatigue is closely linked to Hochschild's (2003) concept of emotional labour, referring to the work that racialised people have to do to exist and survive in white spaces and the adverse effects on mental and physical health (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2011; Thorsen, 2018, 2019). Such racial battle fatigue unfolded in a specific fieldwork moment in Hamburg that spoke to the violence that young Black men experience in the city.

> Scene: A group of 30–40 people are gathered in front of a white tent at Park Fiction to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the death of Yaya Djabi, a young man from Guinea-Bissau, who was arrested by police in Hamburg in 2016 for carrying 1.65 grams of marijuana. He spent several months in jail. Just a few days before his release, he was found dead in his cell. I attend the memorial in the cold and rainy Hamburg night and I recognise activists from migrant rights and anti-racist groups that I have met on other occasions. Tonight's memorial is organised by an umbrella initiative of different local anti-racist groups in the city. The initiative wants to officially re-name the square that the memorial is currently held in to 'Yaya Djabi Square.'
>
> Yaya's friends and family speak about his death in a German prison, the lack of answers they have received since then, and the grief and anger they live with daily. A family member's voice grows louder, then trembles as he recounts that he was recently stopped by the police at the exact square that we are standing at now. How angry and upset it made him that the police officers didn't even know that this place is named after Yaya; that, until recently, there was a graffiti mural, a portrait of Yaya, on the building across the street. The speaker yells his anger and pain towards the police car parked in front of the square, presumably to keep an eye on the assembled group.

The pain and anger articulated in the above scene is an expression of racial battle fatigue, I argue, that is expressed most poignantly in the speeches of Yaya's friends and families. Here, racial battle fatigue is transformed into sudden, intense emotional expressions of, most prominently, anger and sorrow. This shows how emotions are knotted together in messy entanglements (Ahmed, 2014; Ngai, 2005); how the consistent brutality of racialisation produces states of fatigue alongside rage and sorrow.

In this moment of racial battle fatigue, I noted how the emotion circulates in a realm of historical and present-day lived trauma and violence. Moreover, it links to the violence of (in)attention as it relates the struggles of overlooked communities to the attention that certain refugee communities that arrived in Europe more recently receive. The above scene provides an insight into how when Black migrants in Europe do receive attention, it is most often in the form of violence through repressive policies and policing. This violence is also articulated in what has been referred to as the "politics of exhaustion" (Welander & Vries, 2016) which is understood as political and institutionalised forms of violence through the migration control policies directed towards refugees. This violence is expressed through increasingly restrictive asylum procedures, a suspension of asylum decision-making, leaving people in states of limbo indefinitely, and camps such as the infamous Moria camp on Lesvos Island as well as deportation centres in which people are held in prison-like settings (see Davies, Isakjee, & Dhesi, 2017; Suárez-Krabbe, Lindberg, & Arce, 2018). Moreover, continuous racial profiling, as described previously, and other discriminatory practices contribute to this exhaustion even beyond the immediate sites of the migration spectacle such as borders and camps. As the scene above describes, these practices of exhaustion and violence extend themselves to European urban spaces. It is in the circulation of racialised histories, of state violence against Black people and especially Black migrants in Europe that racial battle fatigue moves and in which it accumulates with every violent encounter. Bringing the "politics of exhaustion" into conversation with experiences of racial battle fatigue is helpful in connecting these struggles, which occur in different countries and moments in time, but which are linked through the post-colonial configurations of the migration control field.

These racialised experiences of fatigue are pertinent in the example of Mamadou (see previous section) as well as the grievances voiced at the community meetings by different African diaspora associations that I attended in Athens. During these meetings, attendees repeatedly expressed feeling doubly marginalised, both as migrants, and as Black people. They felt excluded from Greek society, NGOs and humanitarian organisations as well as from other migrant communities. At one of these meetings, a participant remarked that African migrants were unable to attend many of the programs and support structures offered by NGOs and local initiatives because they focused on Arabic or Farsi-speaking refugees. These examples indicate a selectiveness of institutional (in)attention. The institutional (in)attention can give rise to a different kind of fatigue, which is produced when individuals and communities are continuously overlooked and excluded from services and participation. While symbolic locations such as City Plaza become illuminated through the bright spotlight of media and research attention, other communities existing in the shadows of this spotlight are exhausted from inattention.

Mamadou and many members of his association arrived in Athens years before the summer of 2015. And although many are still struggling to get papers and against precarity, they are in other ways less 'novel' and, therefore, possibly of less interest to journalists and researchers. (In)attention is related to the temporal properties of immediacy or lack thereof. As the events of 2015 were framed as immediacies and crises by politicians, the public and researchers, the experiences of people who had arrived in Athens previously were not included in the urgency paradigm (Tazzioli & De Genova, 2016).

Although in a very different manner, the fatigue and exhaustion produced by border violence and restrictive migration policies also affects people working in the field as it impedes their ability to support and struggle with the migrant communities targeted by these policies.

5. Compassion Fatigue

> Scene: Alexandros quit his previous job in Thessaloniki, where he worked with homeless undocumented youth, because of his grievances with the limited resources available: Building trust relationships with the youth was a long and tedious process and once he finally established trust, Alexandros felt he could not offer much to the young people. Youth shelters were overcrowded and the social workers could not create housing alternatives, let alone provide psychological support. He left the job, moved to Athens and now works as a psychological counsellor at a shelter for 300 asylum seekers. Most of the people living there have chronic illnesses and mental health issues. They usually live there for two to three months. In this time, they see many different counsellors and social workers and often have to retell their traumatic experiences to new personnel without access to long-term therapeutic treatment. Alexandros describes the situation in drastic terms, saying "the people are treated like animals in an experiment." He knows that the conditions of his work are terrible, but he continues to do the best he can with the limited means available. Nonetheless, Alexandros is unsure how long he will be able to continue working in this field. The circumstances are taking a toll on him.

Alexandros's fatigue is not a singular emotion, but an amalgam of knotted feelings (Ngai, 2005), including, among others, frustration and feeling responsible to ensure access to legal and social support services for migrants in the country. His fatigue was mirrored in conversations I had with other social workers who discussed similar challenges. One woman, referring to changes to the asylum procedure implemented by the Greek government in mid-2019, summarised this sentiment when she said: "I feel like we are back to square one." In these examples, fatigue circulates between social workers and researchers who work within the domain of asylum and migration, and the refugee bodies onto which the disciplinary tools of bureaucratic and administrative practices are impressed, and, in turn, reflected, rejected and contested. Social workers expressed the pain and frustration that they experienced working in a political context that continuously restricted their professional capability to adequately support the people they work with. Their fatigue circulates in the politicised realm of restrictive EU migration and asylum policies in which deterrence at the borders and deportation policies increasingly replace protection and rights-based approaches.

The term 'compassion fatigue,' frequently used in the context of health care and social work, describes the emotions experienced and the eventual emotional flattening which practitioners, who repeatedly hear and witness others' trauma in their work, may experience (Fox, 2019). The repetition of trauma in their work can erode practitioners' ability to remain compassionate as a result of numbing to others' trauma, such as instances where a general sense of fatigue results in disengagement and cynicism (see Eule, Borrelli, Lindberg, & Wyss, 2019; Wettergren, 2010). Alexandros's story, however, elucidates a further nuance to compassion fatigue. In this case, it is the severity of the trauma witnessed in daily work combined with a sense of helplessness in relieving these traumas with the tools and institutional context available to him as a social worker that evokes his fatigue. In other words, compassion does not fatigue, but the inability to act creates fatigue. Hofmeyer, Kennedy, and Taylor (2019) thus propose the concept of 'emphatic distress fatigue' to more accurately address this experience. This concept, I also want to suggest, captures Alexandros's experience more succinctly. Empathic distress fatigue is not limited to those in professional care capacities. Because fatigue circulates between, amongst others, different institutional agents, it is also felt among researchers who are entangled in this circulation (see also findings by Welander & Vries, 2016).

> Scene: Since arriving in Hamburg a few days ago, I have felt anxious and tired. I should be leaving the house, meeting people, reaching out to NGOs and migrant organisations and catching up with interlocutors from a previous project, but I can't. I have barely left the house for two days. I don't want to speak to anyone. I postpone my meeting with Navid, an interlocutor, only to feel regretful of that decision moments later. After all, he is doing me a favour by agreeing to meet up. Am I a resource, a disturbance or even an imposition, and does he want to meet out of a feeling of obligation? What if he doesn't want to meet me anymore?

In the above scenes, fatigue "ripples" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 120) and spills over to others entangled with the migration field, such as Alexandros, and eventually myself in the role of researcher. In the scene, my own position as a node within this network of fatigue became

apparent while I simultaneously struggled to comprehend its meaning. However, while I too experience a kind of fatigue by the complexities of the migration field in Hamburg, as a researcher, I can withdraw from the field and, to some extent, the emotionality associated with it. This sets me apart from most of the interlocutors in my research and reveals the uneven emotional geography in which fatigues impress on bodies and realities. As Laliberté and Schurr (2016, p. 75) argue: "Our fluctuating emotional geographies during research are produced through processes of identification and disidentification emerging and unfolding in different spatial and temporal contexts of the field." Writing about my own fatigue in relation to the fatigues experienced by others within the affective economy reveals the reach, legitimacy and possibilities of different emotional spaces. It points towards different modes of expression and ways of addressing the objects of fatigue, which are interrelated through colonial histories and post-colonial presents. Fatigue, in the examples of Alexandros and myself, has the power to alienate us from our 'fields' as we struggle to understand our place in it, but it can also lead us to ask how we can position ourselves within or against these dynamics. As Ngai (2005) shows, fatigue smoulders for a long time before it either dies down or erupts. Thus, if not addressed, fatigue may have the power to prevent solidarity and engagement by eroding feelings of connectedness and engagement. However, I wonder if, in a similar vein, fatigue may not also be a productive and creative force. How can we use, and at times even provoke an eruption of fatigue, to constitute empathic engagement between actors despite and because of their differentiated positionalities within the migration field?

6. Concluding Remarks

Fatigue, this 'ugly,' slowly accumulating emotion (Ngai, 2005), circulates in the borderlands between Denmark and Germany, in the stories between Hamburg and Athens, between, with and through people like Poya, Mamadou, Alexandros, Yaya's friends and family, Navid and myself, through our lived experiences, our histories and the different institutional and social contexts. This is what Ahmed calls "the rippling effects of emotions" (2014, p. 120).

While I have tried to show how different fatigues emerged in my research encounters, I have also shown that all too often they are intertwined with other emotions and cannot be neatly separated into distinct types. The fatigues discussed here are interlinked across personal histories of racialisation, gender, class, citizenship and geography and exist in the realm of (and struggle against) an increasingly restrictive migration control field. These explorations of emotions render visible how fatigue is produced and shared, but also differently experienced by actors in in the field. Fatigue accumulates in the emotional geographies and through attachments formed in my fieldwork.

I hope this article has shown that using feelings such as fatigue as a methodologically tool and an analytical object in ethnographic accounts can open up for a reflexive engagement with the uneven emotional geographies that researchers move in, and that they in turn also shape. A critical engagement with the emotional entanglements through reflexive methods can uncover the uneven power relations at play in the relational geographies that researchers are part of (Aparna, 2020) and point towards some of the breaches between what research aims to do and the effects it has. It can be a useful starting point for calling into question the very hierarchies of knowledge production in which I, as a university-employed PhD candidate, am embedded in. Moreover, this approach helps, not only in understanding our own positions in the fields that we as researchers are embedded in, but also how these positions are entangled with the much wider migration control field and the different actors involved in it. Together, we are co-producing the emotional geography of the field, even if as researchers we often have the possibility to withdraw again when our 'projects' are done.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their excellent comments. For their help with developing my thoughts on the role of emotions in fieldwork, I thank the editors of this thematic issue as well as Annika Lindberg and August Schwensen. This article is partly based on Mirjam Wajsberg' Research Talent Grant financed by Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), grant number 406.18.520.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Ahmed, S. (2014). *The cultural politics of emotion* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Aparna, K. (2020). *Enacting asylum university: Politics of research encounters and (re)producing borders in asylum relations*. Nijmegen: Radboud University.

Aparna, K., Kande, O., Kramsch, O., & Schapendonk, J. (in press). L'Europe n'est plus L'Europe: Montaging borderlands of help for a radical politics of place. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*.

Bechtel, W. (2017). The state of racial justice in Germany. In M. Elósegui & C. Hermida (Eds.), *Racial justice, policies and courts' legal reasoning in Europe* (pp. 157–166). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Bejarano, C. A., Juárez, L. L., García, M. A. M., & Goldstein, D. M. (2019). *Decolonizing ethnography: Undocumented immigrants and new directions in social science*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Belina, B. (2016). Der Alltag der Anderen: Racial profil-

ing in Deutschland? [The everyday life of the others: Racial profiling in Germany?]. In B. Dollinger & H. Schmidt-Semisch (Eds.), *Sicherer Alltag? Politiken und Mechanismen der Sicherheitskonstruktion im Alltag* [Safe everyday life? Policies and mechanisms of security construction in everyday life] (pp. 123–146). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Berlant, L. G. (Ed.). (2004). *Compassion: The culture and politics of an emotion*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bondi, L. (2005). Making connections and thinking through emotions: Between geography and psychotherapy. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *30*(4), 433–448. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2005.00183.x

Cabot, H. (2019). The business of anthropology and the European refugee regime. *American Ethnologist*, *46*(3), 261–275. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12791

Cantat, C. (2016). Rethinking mobilities: Solidarity and migrant struggles beyond narratives of crisis. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, *2*(4). https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v2i4.286

Clark, T. (2008). 'We're over-researched here!' Exploring accounts of research fatigue within qualitative research engagements. *Sociology*, *42*(5), 953–970.

Crabapple, M. (2017, June 23). This refugee squat represents the best and worst of humanity. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/23/refugee-squat-city-plaza-greece-best-worst-humanity

Davies, T., Isakjee, A., & Dhesi, S. (2017). Violent inaction: The necropolitical experience of refugees in Europe. *Antipode*, *49*(5), 1263–1284. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12325

Donnerbauer, P. (2016, June 5). City Plaza: Das Refugee-Hotel im Herzen von Athen [City Plaza: The refugee hotel in the heart of Athens]. *Vice*. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/de/article/vdjwwx/city-plaza-das-refugee-hotel-im-herzen-von-athen-123

Eule, T., Borrelli, L. M., Lindberg, A., & Wyss, A. (2019). *Migrants before the law: Contested migration control in Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fox, M. (2019). Compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma in everyday hospital social work: A personal narrative of practitioner–researcher identity transition. *Social Sciences*, *8*(313). https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8110313

Gilroy, P. (2013). *There ain't no black in the Union Jack: The cultural politics of race and nation*. London: Routledge.

Gorton, K. (2007). Theorizing emotion and affect: Feminist engagements. *Feminist Theory*, *8*(3), 333–348. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1464700107082369

Hänsel, V., Hess, S., & Kasparek, B. (2019). Border management and migration controls: Germany report (Paper 2019/21). Göttingen: Georg-August Universität. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3268245

Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hockey, R. (2013). *The psychology of fatigue: Work, effort and control*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hofmeyer, A., Kennedy, K., & Taylor, R. (2019). Contesting the term 'compassion fatigue': Integrating findings from social neuroscience and self-care research. *Collegian*, *27*(2), 232–237. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.colegn.2019.07.001

Isin, E. (2009). Citizenship in flux: The figure of the activist citizen. *Subjectivity*, *29*(1), 367–388.

Laliberté, N., & Schurr, C. (2016). Introduction: The stickiness of emotions in the field—Complicating feminist methodologies. *Gender, Place and Culture*, *23*(1), 72–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.992117

Lutz, C., & Abu-Lughod, L. (Eds.). (1990). *Language and the politics of emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mezzadra, S. (2018). In the wake of the Greek Spring and the Summer of Migration. *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, *117*(3), 925–933. https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-7166092

Ngai, S. (2005). *Ugly feelings*. London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Raimondi, V. (2019). For 'common struggles of migrants and locals.' Migrant activism and squatting in Athens. *Citizenship Studies*, *23*(6), 559–576. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2019.1634373

Robbins, J. (2013). Beyond the suffering subject: Toward an anthropology of the good. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *19*(3), 447–462. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12044

Rozakou, K. (2019). 'How did you get in?' Research access and sovereign power during the 'migration crisis' in Greece. *Social Anthropology*, *27*(S1), 68–83. https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12620

Rozakou, K. (2020). Crisis. In A. D. Lauri (Ed.), *Humanitarianism: Keywords* (pp. 38–40). Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill.

Schmitz, S., & Ahmed, S. (2014). Affect/emotion: Orientation matters—A conversation between Sigrid Schmitz and Sara Ahmed. *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Geschlechter Studien*, *22*(2), 97–108. https://doi.org/10.3224/fzg.v20i2.17137

Schwarz, I. (2016). Racializing freedom of movement in Europe: Experiences of racial profiling at European borders and beyond. *Movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, *2*(1), 255–265.

Smith, W. (2004). Black faculty coping with racial battle fatigue: The campus racial climate in a post-civil rights era. In D. Cleveland (Ed.), *A long way to go: Conversations about race by African American faculty and graduate students* (4 ed., pp. 171–190). New York, NY: P. Lang.

Smith, W. A., Yosso, T. J., & Solórzano, D. G. (2011). Challenging racial battle fatigue on historically white campuses: A critical race examination of race-related

stress. In R. D. Coates (Ed.), *Covert racism: Theories, institutions, and experiences* (pp. 211–237). Leiden: Brill.

Squire, V. (2018). Mobile solidarities and precariousness at City Plaza: Beyond vulnerable and disposable lives. *Studies in Social Justice*, *12*(1), 111–132. https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v12i1.1592

Suárez-Krabbe, J., Lindberg, A., & Arce, J. (2018). *Stop killing us slowly: A research report on the motivation enhancement measures and criminalization of rejected asylum seekers in Denmark*. Copenhagen: Roskilde University.

Sukarieh, M., & Tannock, S. (2013). On the problem of over-researched communities: The case of the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. *Sociology*, *47*(3), 494–508. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0038038512448567

Tazzioli, M., & De Genova, N. (Eds.). (2016). *Europe/crisis: New keywords of "the crisis" in and of "Europe."* New York, NY: Zone Books.

Tazzioli, M., & Garelli, G. (2018). Containment beyond detention: The hotspot system and disrupted migration movements across Europe. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space and Polity*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0263775818759335

Thorsen, T. S. (2018, May 20). Denmark's racist backlash: On battle fatigue across borders. *Tess S. Skadegard Thorsen*. Retrieved from https://medium.com/@tess_thorsen/denmarks-racist-backlash-c6cbdc8e5e53

Thorsen, T. S. (2019). Minoritetsbeskatning—et værktøj til at forstå opretholdelse af strukturelle uligheder i dansk akademia. [Minority taxation—A tool for understanding the maintenance of structural inequality in Danish academia]. *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, *28*(1/2), 31–43.

Vanyoro, K. P., Hadj-Abdou, L., & Dempster, H. (2019, July 19). Migration studies: From dehumanising to decolonising. *LSE Higher Education Blog*. Retrieved from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/highereducation/2019/07/19/migration-studies-from-dehumanising-to-decolonising

Way, E. (2013). *Understanding research fatigue in the context of community–university relations* (Unpublished Master's dissertation). Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA. Retrieved from https://commons.clarku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1018&context=localknowledge

Welander, M., & Vries, L. A. d. (2016, September 30). Refugees, displacement, and the European 'politics of exhaustion.' *openDemocracy*. Retrieved from https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/mediterranean-journeys-in-hope/refugees-displacement-and-europ

Wettergren, A. (2010). Managing unlawful feelings: The emotional regime of the Swedish migration board. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, *3*(4). https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWOE.2010.035327

Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism*. London: Profile Books.

About the Author

Mirjam Wajsberg is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment at Radboud University (NL). Her PhD project takes place between Germany, Denmark and Greece and focuses on im/mobility trajectories of refugees in the EU and different forms of urban resistance to EU migration policies.

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2020, Volume 8, Issue 4, Pages 136–146
DOI: 10.17645/si.v8i4.3326

Article

Methods as Moving Ground: Reflections on the 'Doings' of Mobile Methodologies

Ingrid Boas [1,*], Joris Schapendonk [2], Suzy Blondin [3] and Annemiek Pas [4]

[1] Environmental Policy Group, Wageningen University, 6706KN Wageningen, The Netherlands; E-Mail: ingrid.boas@wur.nl
[2] Geography, Planning, Environment Department, Institute for Management Research, Radboud University, 6525AJ Nijmegen, The Netherlands; E-Mail: j.schapendonk@fm.ru.nl
[3] Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel, 2000 Neuchâtel, Switzerland; E-Mail: suzy.blondin@unine.ch
[4] Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University, 10691 Stockholm, Sweden; E-Mail: annemiek.schrijver@humangeo.su.se

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 4 June 2020 | Accepted: 21 August 2020 | Published: 19 November 2020

Abstract
As mobilities studies became a well-respected field in social science, discussions on mobile research designs followed. Usually, these discussions are part of empirical papers and reveal specific methodological choices of individual researchers, or groups of researchers sharing the same objectives and questions. This article starts with a different approach. It is based on continuous discussions between four researchers who developed their own version of mobility-driven projects, starting from different disciplinary backgrounds and using different research techniques. By sharing and contrasting personal fieldwork experiences, we reflect on the *doings* of mobile methodologies. We engage with the mistakes, dilemmas, and (dis)comforts that emerge from our own mobile research practices, and discuss what this implies for relations of power between the researcher and the research participants, and to what extent mobile research can represent the mobility that we seek to study. Specifically, the article addresses three questions: 1) To what extent do we produce *different* knowledge with our mobile methodologies? 2) How do our smooth writings about methodology relate to the 'messy' realities in the field? 3) How do our practices articulate and transcend difference between researchers and research participants?

Keywords
mobile methodologies; mobility; positionality; reflexivity; representation

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe" edited by Kolar Aparna (Radboud University, The Netherlands), Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, The Netherlands) and Cesar Merlín-Escorza (Radboud University, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction

The so-called 'mobilities turn' seeks to establish "a movement-driven social sciences" (Büscher & Urry, 2009, p. 100), critiquing place-based and static understandings of social life and conventional approaches upholding to the confines of the nation-state (Davidson, 2020; Urry, 2007). This focus on the 'mobile' character of social life, and human mobility in particular, has led to the use of mobile methodologies. Researchers in this field study people or things on the move, including moments of blockage and voluntary or forced periods of immobility, using mobile methods such as 'moving with' people or objects, or digitally tracing these movements (Büscher & Urry, 2009; D'Andrea, Ciolfi, & Gray, 2011; Elliot, Norum, & Salazar, 2017; Schapendonk, 2020; Schapendonk, Liempt, Schwarz, & Steel, 2018; Spinney, 2011). Less known, however, is the practicality, and the

wider academic implications, of using mobile methodologies (for notable exceptions see D'Andrea et al., 2011; Elliot et al., 2017; Merriman, 2014). Therefore, and in line with the main objective of this thematic issue, we reflect on the actual 'doings' and implications of these methodological approaches. More specifically, we relate mobile methodologies with the question of 'academic inclusion' (see Aparna, Schapendonk, & Merlín-Escorza, 2020). While the four authors of this article all strongly value mobile research approaches, we came together to discuss our standpoints and insights regarding power and positionality (Faria & Mollett, 2016) and the question of representation (Merriman, 2014), derived from our own fieldwork experiences. We asked ourselves: 1) To what extent do we produce different knowledge with our mobile methodologies? 2) How do our smooth writings about methodology relate to the 'messy' realities in the field? 3) How do our practices articulate and transcend difference between researchers and research participants?

In this article, these questions are not mechanically answered by the four authors but are implicitly and explicitly discussed through personal notes on the shifts, dilemmas and (dis)comforts of individual fieldwork. The first fieldwork note is on West African transnational mobility within Europe. The second focuses on environment-related mobilities in Bangladesh. The third involves a mobile auto-ethnography regarding domestic mobility in Tajikistan. The final fieldwork note discusses pastoral mobility in northern Kenya. By including our personal reflections on the four fieldwork experiences, we offer a heterogeneous picture of what insights, biases, divides and (dis)comforts are produced by mobile approaches. These reflections are then embraced as a 'critical mirror' to collectively discuss the promises and pitfalls of mobile research approaches. This discussion is not a simple consensus-driven exercise, but actually includes reflections on the positionality of each researcher vis-à-vis the other co-authors. The outcome of this discussion highlights how researchers can change and adjust their applied methods and 'move with' new ideas. This results in an invitation for more reflexivity in mobility research.

2. 'Moving with' as a Research Methodology

Mobile methods (Büscher & Urry, 2009) and mobile methodologies (Elliot et al., 2017) are terms that became popularised in the course of the 2000s (e.g., Büscher & Urry, 2009; D'Andrea et al., 2011; Hein, Evans, & Jones, 2008). Büscher and Urry (2009) put forward a number of methods to move beyond the conventional, stationary methods of social science. These range from observing movements through participant observation, or audio-visual records of everyday mobility, to physically moving with a migrant, commuter, cyclist, container, or animal (see also Hein et al., 2008). While Büscher and Urry (2009) offer these methods in the context of the mobilities turn, it is important to note that research designs have (of course) not been completely blind to mobility (Benson, 2011). For anthropologists, evident points of reference are the widely discussed paper by Marcus (1995)—who advocates following the people, the thing, the metaphor, the plot, biography or conflict—and the work of Clifford (1997) on ethnography as a form of travel. Earlier research has also dealt with mobile people, including anthropological accounts of living and moving with those who live in mobility (e.g., Okely, 1983). One notable example is the work of Goldstein and Beall (1987, p. 2), who travelled with pastoralist groups in Tibet. They explicitly wrote about the practicalities of their mobility:

> The widely scattered nomad campsites required us to move our camp frequently in order to obtain a meaningful sample. We hired yaks from the nomads to move our tent and equipment, but yaks are rather unruly animals and frequently threw off our loads damaging quite a bit of our equipment. It also often took days to arrange to hire these yaks (and horses) since they are normally left alone in the mountains quite far from the nomads' tentsites. For the next phase of the study we plan to buy our own horses and are making arrangements to hire our own caravan of yaks. We also will obviously have to make better carrying cases.

This quote illustrates that the mobility of the researcher is not merely a practical issue, but also—and inherently so—an intervention in 'the field.' The quote reflects the argument of Law and Urry (2004, p. 391) that methods are tools not only to "describe the world as it is, but also enact it."

The question of enactment—of bringing something into being—is particularly relevant for research approaches that seek to 'move with' people. There are two main concerns that are attached to the notion of enacting mobility. The first concern relates to positionality and representation of 'moving with' approaches. To understand its dynamics, mobility researchers often follow mobilities, or practice it themselves, in order to capture mobility in its full dynamism (see, for example, Spinney, 2011; for a critique see Merriman, 2014). In migration research, this resulted in so-called 'trajectory approaches' (Schapendonk, 2020; van Geel & Mazzucato, 2018; Wilson, 2018) that produce a methodological shift from investigating migrants' position in a place, towards the "following of migrants through places" (Schapendonk et al., 2018). Central to these 'moving with' approaches are the practices and perspectives of the people on the move. These approaches offer insight into the everyday experiences of movement, or stillness, and from there it examines sites of struggle, marginalisation, duress or empowerment, in relation to other mobilities, networked actors or mobility regimes (Büscher & Urry, 2009; Schapendonk et al., 2018). This ambition of 'capturing' the full dynam-

ics of mobility, however, is simultaneously the main pitfall of a 'moving with' methodology. As ethnographic researchers, we often try to relate ourselves to the experiences of people on the move, to understand choices made and emotions felt. This brings us to the question of positionality.

As highlighted by Khosravi (2018) and Cabot (2016) in relation to refugees and forced migration, the question is: Can we—as privileged people working in academia—really know their experiences? Can we really put oneself in the shoes of the 'Other'? What do we know and what do we enact when researchers engage with less privileged mobility? When it concerns unauthorised movements, this might not only create uneven power relations, but it may even put people at risk. The researcher could enhance the "visibility of the migrant, which in turn increases the risk of being exposed to border patrols or being the target of extortion" (Khosravi, 2018). This demonstrates the need for constant reflection on part of the researcher in employing such methods. We cannot experience the world in precisely the same way as the people we study (Khosravi, 2018). Here mobility approaches might learn from a longer legacy of the discussion of politics of research relations in migration and refugee studies (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Malkki, 1995; van Liempt & Bilger, 2009; see also Aparna, 2020).

Secondly, and closely related to the concern of representation, moving with individuals create its own biases. Following mobility might run the risk of either making assumptions for an entire community through a bias towards the one that is being 'followed.' In this regard, some scholars criticise the notion of transient and flexible communities in the context of so-called transit migration (Stock, 2019), as studies focusing on transit and onward movement overlook long-term community bonds in migrant groups in presumed transit locations. Other scholars encounter immobility and permanence in a presumed culture of mobility (Gaibazzi, 2015). In theory, mobility studies see mobility and immobility as dialectically constitutive (Wiegel, Boas, & Warner, 2019), though in practice a 'moving with' approach risks ignoring these immobilities and, more specifically, the gendered notions of mobility/immobility relations (Reeves, 2011). In other words, who we follow (and who we do not follow) has implications for doing mobility research and the researcher's understanding of mobility processes.

To sum up, whilst much is written about 'moving with' research designs, and such methods are increasingly being applied in practice, this needs to be accompanied with active reflection by the researcher on the ethics, practicalities and limitations of such an approach. To add evidence to this, we present in the next sections our reflections on four fieldwork experiences using mobile methodologies. We seek to be transparent about our choices and own subjective understandings with regards to practices and experiences of mobilities.

3. 'Doing' Mobile Methodologies: Fieldwork Reflections

3.1. Notes on Trajectory Research on West African Cross-Border Mobility within and beyond Europe (Schapendonk)

There is something inherently odd with the approach of following people—an approach I advocated from the start of my academic work. Some of the oddness is part of fundamental ethnographic puzzles around relatedness, power and knowledge—others are specifically linked to the mobility involved. Below, I relate these issues to my research practices.

The trajectory ethnography that I developed is to a large extent built on the argument that migration studies start from sedentarist conceptualisations that 'exceptionalise' mobility (Schapendonk, Bolay, & Dahinden, 2020). A mobility perspective enabled me to move away from the idea of the 'grant departure' of migrants (the presumed all-decisive moment of leaving one's place) and prevented me from falling into the 'happy ends' of place-bound integration and settlement. With this critique came the idea to follow migrants through space and time, in order to better understand mobility processes at the moments they actually unfold. But this 'moving with' approach runs the risk of reproducing the spectacular image of migration. In my PhD thesis, for example, I used the typical image of African migrants climbing the Ceuta fences. Although I related this image to the argument that we should not focus on these moments only, I now regard this image as a critical mirror since it does portray mobility as something problematic, exotic, exciting and political. As if we indeed need to grasp it (Aparna, 2020, based on Glissant) in order to normalise it. In my later work on the intra-EU mobility of West Africans, this mundane search for spectacular mobility lasted, although in less explicit ways. I remember my excited voice when one of my interlocutors 'reported' on his most recent irregular border crossing. Why do I (almost automatically) think these are the moments we should write about? Why are these spectacular crossings more important than the everyday commuting of borders that I also came across? A first reply could hint at the politics of mobility. The argument then is: Since these border crossings are unauthorised, they articulate the politics of mobility as they reflect the unequal distribution of mobility rights. But do they really? I mean, some of my interlocutors did not feel excited at all when they crossed borders in Europe without papers. One particular man actually fell asleep during his unauthorised train travels from Italy to Germany in the 'heat' of the so-called migration crisis. To my asking what actually happened *en route*, he simply replied: "Nothing really happened." Equally so, other people were confronted with immobility on their daily pathways to their work. They needed to wait for transport, some hitchhiked, and again others walked long distances to

reach these places. These politics of mobility, however, are seen (by me and others) as less significant, often without any further justification.

The latter hints at the issue of relatedness. I consider my research as a product of relations, rather than a phenomenological representation of their mobility (Schapendonk, 2020). Yet, there were so many moments whereby any ground for relatedness between me and my interlocutors was difficult to find—situations of anxiety, risk and xenophobic violence. In my recent book (Schapendonk, 2020), I discuss and unpack these moments of un-relatedness, as it articulates what our boundaries are in terms of knowledge production.

The actual doings of the trajectory ethnography involved much travelling: I followed, among others, people's trajectories between Germany and the Netherlands, Spain and Italy, Italy and Switzerland, the Netherlands and the Gambia. The revisiting of people in different places is facilitated by the numerous in-between communications and a lot of hanging around with people. These longitudinal engagements are, of course, self-selective. I was dependent on the willingness of the people I worked with to answer my calls and messages. The stiffer social relations, the easier research relations collapsed. To put it differently, I ended up 'following' people on the basis of 'liking' each other (see also Lems, 2020). These bonds—some lasting for over a decade now—form fruitful grounds for insightful discussions on borders and mobility. The actual re-visiting of people in different places is, in general, a helpful way of producing stronger bonds and friendships. Ontologically speaking, these engagements formed a floating topology (Simone, 2019), as they not only helped me to construct an alternative worldview regarding mobility in contemporary Europe, but they also served mobility for me and my interlocutors. Through these relations possible travel destinations were discussed and new connections were made (Schapendonk, 2020).

The mobility involved comes with substantial personal inconveniences. As a father of two, I had to leave home many times in rather spontaneous ways. Following trajectories is in that sense a method that is difficult to plan beforehand, as it depends so much on the mobility of others. Also in terms of knowledge creation, there are clear downsides. I built only limited knowledge on 'local contexts'—and contextualisation is still seen as the main form of authority in ethnographic writing. At the same time, my travels between different places created something that I highly value, namely a space that unfreezes migrant positionalities in Europe today (Schapendonk, 2020, p. 198). Despite this unfreezing, it is of crucial importance, however, to not overlook people's unchanging situations. My re-visits to the people who did not move within Europe are in that sense equally valuable. Here I think of Shakur—a Gambian young man who got stuck in Italy's asylum procedures. Between 2014 and 2018, I visited him several times in the same asylum shelter. From his position of immobility, he saw most of his friends move across borders, looking for opportunities elsewhere, living postnational lives in Europe. From his static position, he saw the world moving around. We should, therefore, not ignore how place-based research designs (Gielis, 2009) add to our understanding of mobilities.

3.2. From 'Moving with' to Tracing Connections: Environmentally-Related Human Mobility in Bangladesh (Boas)

In this fieldwork note, I reflect on my study of rural coastal communities in Bangladesh, which have to move in the context of environmental changes (Boas, 2020). Initially the intent was to move along with environmental migrants while conducting semi-structured interviews with them (Boas, 2019). This was associated with a particular view on how environmental migration looks like. I anticipated it to be feasible to identify people moving in the context of environmental changes, but this turned out not to be the case.

Especially in the context of gradual environmental changes (such as coastal erosion), the need to move is not always immediate (on slow displacement see Carte, Schmook, Radel, & Johnson, 2019). Deciding on the possible need to move could take months, or even years (Boas, 2020). As such, it would be very rare to meet someone moving away to a new place—as this consists of a long-term period of deliberation and planning. Also, when people move, it is often individuals or specific families who move, rather than entire groups or villages, as gradual environmental changes do not affect everyone at the same time. The migration dynamics are, as such, rather fragmented, as opposed to taking shape as a clearly identifiable stream.

That I fell into the trap of thinking that there would be easily identifiable 'flows' of environmental migrants, reflects the 'exceptionalisation' of mobility, as discussed in the above note on African (im)mobility. I had put a generalised, often media- and political-driven, label of migration upon this subject of environmentally-related human mobility, assuming a 'grand departure' with collectives of people moving. This does not mean that I was, per se, underprepared—I had undertaken substantial literature study and had in preparation actively engaged with local partners, who pointed me to areas where people are affected by environmental changes in their mobility. It is rather that environmental mobility is a relatively new area of research, in which both policymakers, NGOs, and researchers (including local ones), are still often driven by assumptions which turn out to be invalid when delving into messy empirical realities.

To account for this different reality, I re-oriented from 'moving with' a person to re-tracing or pre-tracing migration trajectories (including imagined and planned ones), with the use of more traditional place-based interviews. This meant studying how people draw on social network ties to enable their decisions to move, using mobile tech-

nologies (Boas, 2020). For example, if I met someone planning to move to a certain place, I would travel to meet their contacts in that other place, to better understand their connection and what they imagined the shift to look like. I would use public transport to undertake the journey, to experience how they travelled there. Through face-to-face and digital exchanges with those I met during the research, though not always successful, I tried to verify if they were still accepting of me tracing their trajectory; not just by stating yes or no, but also by sensing whether someone felt uncomfortable talking to me or, more obviously, did not pick up the phone. Just like in the above field notes, I also experienced that friendships emerged out of some of these encounters, especially when tracing someone's trajectory for a long period of time. This also raised questions as to when the research ends or enters a more private domain of trust-based on friendship.

Generally, this shift from 'moving with' to (re/pre-)tracing trajectories, has helped me to better understand what environmental-related mobility entails. For example, one of the trajectories I traced involved a group of mostly women and children living in a heavily affected area of the island of Kutubdia, in the south-east of Bangladesh, in which most of the agricultural fields have been destroyed by incoming seawater (Boas, 2020). A number of male farmers from that area have already travelled to the mainland for work. The women who remained have taken the initiative in the search for a safer home. Most want to move to Chakaria—which is a hilly and green area on the mainland, close to Kutubdia island. One of these women is Morsheda. I met her in 2017 when she was trying to secure a house in Chakaria. She and her sister-in-law, Kadiza, who already has a temporary house in Chakaria, called each other daily for small talk, but also to discuss progress on a potential move (Boas, 2020). To get a better sense of Chakaria, I visited Kadiza's house, about four hours travel from Morsheda's house using local public transport and a boat. It was a temporary construction looking somewhat like a tent made from plastic, erected on the side of someone else's home. Morsheda and Kadiza were determined to find a more permanent home in Chakaria where they both could live. They would view different pieces of land where they potentially could live. In 2017, it all appeared very uncertain whether this move would transpire. In November 2019, I returned to Kutubdia. Morsheda had news. Together with Kadiza and two other neighbors they bought a piece of land in Chakaria. Kadiza and her family live there on a permanent basis, and the three other families can make use of it when the flooding is severe.

From tracing these connections, and by following up on Morsheda's story over the long-term, a different image of environmental mobility emerged, contrary to expectations. As opposed to moving away on a permanent basis or long-distance, this case instead finds a more ad-hoc temporary displacement strategy that allows those involved to collaboratively stay in their places of origin, whilst having an opt-out in times of emergency. This shows how assumptions about mobility are often misplaced, and that an effective mobile methodology requires constant interaction within the context of the research.

3.3. Autoethnography as a Research Method of Local Im/Mobility Uncertainties in Tajikistan (Blondin)

This third fieldwork note focuses on the environment-mobilities nexus at different scales in the mountains of the Viloyati Muxtori Kuhistoni Badakhshon (Autonomous Province of Mountainous Badakhshon), in Tajikistan. The aim was to understand the consequences of avalanches, rockslides and floods for populations living in the villages of the Bartang Valley, located between 2200 and 3100 meters above sea level, which are particularly remote. Journeys to villages of the middle and upper parts of the valley are full of uncertainties given the frequency of environmental hazards, the absence of public transport, the low motorisation rate and, particularly, the bad state of both vehicles and roads. In the absence of any public transport, the Bartangi use private shared cars to go to the city (mostly Khorog, the provincial capital). Drivers work according to a weekly schedule and leave once cars are full. I have used such cars to go to the Bartang Valley and to move around in the Valley. When no car was available, I have also shared long walking trips with local residents. Therefore, my journeys to the field have brought about various challenges such as finding a car, undergoing car repairs on the way, crossing flooded roads by car or on foot, organizing spontaneous sleepovers in the event of a breakdown, fighting feelings of anxiety about bad road conditions and staying patient in situations of strandedness.

Although I initially aimed to analyse the effects of environmental variability on permanent migration in the form of relocation, I quickly realised that local residents were more concerned about the effects of climate variability on mobility to the nearest town. When roads are blocked by avalanches, floods or rockslides, residents may face situations of involuntary immobility (Blondin, 2020). As such, I reoriented the research towards local-scale mobilities and immobilities. With this new perspective in mind, my own experiences of journeys to/through the field became valuable research insights: what mobility options were available? How to find a seat in a car? How do cars manage the trip over hazardous terrain? How much time do trips take? As D'Andrea et al. (2011, p. 154) put it:

> As 'getting there' and 'being there' are practical tropes of research feasibility and, in many cases, its own legitimacy, the research journey itself is permanently negotiated along the limitations, expectations and opportunities that end up constituting the actual field of research.

Consequently, I have started to use auto-ethnography as "an excellent way to get at important aspects of human movement" (Vergunst, 2011, p. 203; see also Spinney, 2006). By auto-ethnography I refer to the ways in which my own mobilities, or reflections on my motility (mobility potential), became a method in itself to explore the mobilities of others. Auto-ethnography alone may have limited outcomes but since trips were always shared, it was accompanied by co-itinerant encounters and reflections: How do people move? How do people behave during trips? For instance, I witnessed how the most physically-vulnerable individuals complained about the effects of poor road conditions or worn-out vehicles on their bodies, and travellers praying before a departure and/or chatting throughout about common acquaintances. My own embodied experiences constituted a valuable first approach to understanding the ways in which people accessed mobility options, the skills needed to be mobile and how mobilities were appropriated by different residents.

Reflecting on my own experiences of mobility has been productive when comparing them with my fellow travellers' perceptions during informal conversations and interviews. This approach provided valuable results in terms of acknowledging the unevenness of our motilities (Blondin, 2020). Often, I was more scared by road conditions than my fellow travellers, who insisted that they were "used to the road" and that they were relying on their *barakat* (spiritual protection). After several trips in the region, I could feel that I was getting accustomed to mobility conditions and dangers and a fellow traveller told me: "I can see in your eyes that you are not scared anymore. You have gained some Bartangi *barakat*!" In addition, long walks between villages when no car was available have always been good occasions to compare my (physical) condition with my fellow travellers,' and allowed me to understand more accurately the difficulties of such trips: "The continuing relevance of bodily skills in ethnography, even in these globalised and 'systematised' times, reflects the significance such skills still have in everyday life too" (Vergunst, 2011, p. 216). I felt that my motility was weaker than my companions' because I initially had no experience in such context, or because I was not so good at handling involuntary immobility. But there were also issues that made me privileged in terms of motility when, for instance, I could afford to pay for 'the entire' car, which speeded up my departure if I needed to leave a village quickly. Usually, travellers share a car (like a local taxi) that only departs when all seats are taken. Auto-ethnography and co-travelling made me reflect on what shapes motility in my research context and how uneven mobilities emerge. Although the researcher's experiences cannot be confounded with the experience of research participants, a "kinaesthetic and embodied approach" (Spinney, 2006)—giving emphasis to the sensuous and real-life experiences of journeys—has a clear heuristic potential by offering a more comprehensive view of the mobilities under study.

3.4. Reimagining Mobile Ethnography in the Case of Pastoralism (Pas)

The final note focuses on the study of the mobility of pastoralists in northern Kenya. My aim was to understand how the mobility of pastoralists is transformed in relation to the (re)shaping of territories and access to and control of resources (Pas Schrijver, 2019). Here, recent shifting weather conditions and increased (inter)national investments in nature and wildlife conservation on community land in the pastoralist regions have resulted in mobility becoming more complex (Pas, 2018; Pellis, Pas, & Duineveld, 2018). I studied the case of semi-nomadic Samburu pastoralists at the intersection of three counties: Laikipia, Isiolo and Samburu, within the greater Ewaso Nyiro River Basin.

Here, Samburu pastoralists move with livestock in search of pasture and water. Although based on substantial literature study and initial planning through active engagement with local partners and experts, my choices and assumptions during the preparation stage of my fieldwork—similar to the first two cases of this article—reflected a somewhat presumptuous understanding of mobility. In the preparation phase, I imagined I could join Samburu pastoralists and their cattle at their grazing sites. Yet, starting fieldwork in 2015, I learnt quickly that most of the Samburu cattle, and their herders, were not at home. It was considered an extremely dry year: The cattle had not been home since September 2014 and were in areas considered remote and dangerous. Contrary to what I had imagined, there was not a clearly identified group of people starting their journey who I could 'follow.'

I soon realised that current livestock mobility in Kenya works differently than I had anticipated. Long-distance mobility occurs in relation to specific points of interest which are unevenly spread around the landscape. There is not a final destination, as each point is a destination on its own, making livestock mobility highly patchy and uneven in space and time. What is more, I learned that mobile engagements were insufficient to understand the dynamics of pastoral systems and the environments in which they exist. It is often only a section of the community who will move with the cattle, rather than entire families. Samburu divide their families between those who stay with camels and small stock (sheep, goats, donkeys), often women, children and elder men; and those who move with cattle to faraway places for long periods of time, which are generally the *morans* (young unmarried man between the age of 15 and 30 years), who will live in temporary cattle camps. It was not a good idea to join the *morans* in faraway and often unsafe places, and besides, Samburu pastoralists are more than only on the move.

Therefore, instead of moving in real-time with the cattle and their herders during long-distance livestock mobility, I remained at certain locations. I adapted my research approach to include interviews focusing on nar-

ratives which tried to reconstruct past routes and current pathways of livestock movement. My questions revolved around livestock mobility (not only cattle), access transformations, and how that articulated with the (im)mobility of people. This meant approaching people of different genders and age, discussing how regions were accessible in the past and which processes led to certain forms of exclusion. For example, I talked with Baba Lenketoi from Lekiji, a 74 year-old elder, about his moranhood. During those times, the entire family would continuously move short distances with their livestock. As a *moran*, Baba Lenketoi would only seldom separate from the rest of the family to go with the cattle and other *morans* to temporary cattle camps. These moments were like an adventure, in contrast to the *morans* today, who are mainly spending time in cattle camps far away from home. I also talked with mama Lenkas, who told me that 2015 was the first year she went with her goats to a temporary camp. There was a lack of foraging at home for the goats, therefore the women could not stay close to home either.

Still, the *morans*, who are responsible for moving the cattle to faraway places, remained important to my research. Yet, it was particularly hard to talk with *morans*, who are subject to strict regulations on how to interact in society (Spencer, 1973). The cultural conduct of a *moran* entails that they cannot be seen eating or drinking by women, other than a mother of another *moran* while he is also present. Also, although allowed to talk to women, *morans* are not known for being very talkative. I had the luck to be with Daniel the research assistant from Samburu who was a *moran* himself. Daniel was key to my access to other *morans*, and enabled conversations with them. Still, to get *morans* to talk, I had to prove that I was physically capable of walking. I joined for short-distance daily walks and they became more talkative over time. In addition, although *morans* were not supposed to consume food and beverages in front of me, there were moments when (not upon my request) elders negotiated and I, as a white, European, female scholar, was invited to be present at a meal. Slowly my presence was accepted, and *morans* were joking, considering me a *moran* so they could enjoy their tea in my presence. This shows how my whiteness, education and privilege facilitated access to groups and, therefore, my research in multiple ways (see Discussion section for further reflection on the role of privilege and this gender negotiation process).

All in all, this experience demonstrates that what and/or who you follow has implications for what and/or who you do not follow. My intent to 'follow the cow' would have primarily given me insights from the perspective of *morans* and their cattle, whereas livestock mobility in the Samburu context is more complex. It is interrelated to other people and aspects, such as the increasing importance of women moving with goats, and related dynamics, which my original approach would have overlooked. Situating myself in certain, static, locations not only provided me with different images of the daily realities of livestock mobility, it also indicated important ongoing shifts in the mobility patterns of the Samburu.

4. Discussion

The above fieldwork notes offer an account of the actual 'doings' of mobile methodologies, and how they relate to the questions of academic inclusion and representation. It is important to stress that—although we share an itinerant research approach—all four scholars have different backgrounds and positions in academia. While writing this article, we also noticed that we held different standpoints regarding how we value mobility and how we see the role of the researcher in studying these processes (see Box 1). Here we highlight some of our main

Box 1. Quotes of the authors mirroring our different positionalities in the discussions.

"There is some 'eagerness' in Northern research agendas that I find problematic. Why do we need to break with social codes? Why not respect these codes and change our research ambitions?"

"Would declining invitations by local communities that could 'break the social code" not be 'breaking a code' as well? Aren't social codes always subject to change?"

"It might be that female researchers face more barriers in doing research of others' mobility if we should refrain from too much 'interference' with these 'social codes.' Since in at least most of our cases, much of the mobility mainly included males, with the women more in place."

"Although mobility capitals will never be equal, sharing a sometimes long or difficult journey is a way to form a group, to share experience and memories and may be a way to be more included in this community/group/population. But maybe I am too idealistic here?"

"The embodied and physical aspects of mobilities felt or undergone together, may also be a way to put power inequalities aside. Financial capital or a certain passport can't 'buy' or erase some of the physical challenges of certain trips, for instance."

threads of reflection, that point to some of the synergies and frictions between the different positionalities.

On a practical level, our four cases show how the 'ultimate' mobile methods—that aim to capture mobility when it unfolds—are rather difficult to achieve or, more likely, do not exist. We touched upon different cultural expectations about who can move and we discussed how mobilities may actually entail long periods of immobility. This also underscored how mobility and immobility are closely interlinked (Wiegel et al., 2019), leading some of us to adapt our methodologies to do more research in place. The mobile approach may turn out to be more local than expected; more stable than expected; slower or more fragmented than expected, etcetera, requiring a constant need to adapt to these dynamics.

This need to adjust to mobilities' pace and direction makes us aware of the often-biased initial assumptions guiding research. All cases in this article illustrate how we expected to examine an exceptional form of mobility: such as the seemingly spectacular mobility of irregular border crossing, which later turned out to be mundane or even boring to those involved, or the expectation of grand departures, long-distance and forced migration, whilst for the people involved the simplest movement from home to town is most crucial and most affected. A mobility approach, then, first and foremost means a legitimation to move away from pre-set research designs, and an invitation to invent new research questions 'along the way' and align your 'doings' with the dynamics you encounter and the restrictions you face. Mobile methods form, in this sense, a moving ground. In doing so, it is crucial to be closely connected to local partners, to ensure the research is well grounded and adjusted to local contexts. Nonetheless, as noted in the second and fourth field case, this is no guarantee for a better planned methodology. Local researchers and organisations may also come from societal positions other than the research participants, and may therefore also misinterpret local meanings, especially in the context of not much researched topics. Also, independent of the preparations made, when embedding oneself in the research, new insights emerge along the way, which may require the research to shift course.

On an epistemic level, 'moving with' approaches entail a focus on embodied practices, sensations and the material aspects of mobilities. This gears attention towards the everyday, mundane, ordinary, superfluous and pre-cognitive aspects of mobilities (Adey, 2017; Davidson, 2020). Even when examining the 'exceptional' side of mobilities, our focus on the everyday doings made us shift to its mundane aspects. However, as discussed by Merriman (2014), mobile methods implicitly risk turning research projects into 'representational' projects. This becomes particularly uncomfortable in our cases, since we—despite our reflexivity and local preparations—still started from our default Western gaze with which we studied non-Western mobilities. A way forward could be the autoethnography, as described in the third fieldwork note, by which the researcher can use their own experiences of mobility and immobility and mirror it with the mobility of others (Cook & Edensor, 2017; Spinney, 2006). In this way, observing fellow travellers or interviewing research participants about mobilities also practiced by the researcher may allow for interesting analytical comparisons. At the same time, as the first case articulates, we might encounter a fundamental lack of relatedness to do this. This raises the plea for a more modest ethnographic approach, in the sense that it should not necessarily be the main goal to 'capture' other people's experiences of moving (Cabot, 2016), as mobility research is often aiming for. This would be in line with Merriman's (2014, p. 176) argument that mobility is, in its essence, rather non-representational:

> My experience of driving or passengering along a particular stretch of road is unlikely to be fully aligned with someone else's experiences, whether they are travelling along with me, or not. Physical proximity and co-presence present an illusion of 'first-handedness,' closeness, accuracy and authenticity.

Moreover, by actively seeking to research another's mobility, we actually shape that mobility and trigger specific social transformations. We enact mobility (Law & Urry, 2004). By researching people's im/mobility, we get to know these people, engage with them. This may influence mobility choices, practices and effects. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it does indicate how mobilities are intertwined. What does this intertwining mean for the research and, more importantly, for the people we work with and write about? In the first case, the researcher saw the study of mobility as a product of the relations *he* built, but, in the end, it is still *him* writing about mobilities, showing the limitations of dealing with the intertwined character of mobilities. In the fourth case, the researcher felt well-embedded in the local community under research, while being approached differently by those studied as someone coming from the 'Global North.' During her activities, gender roles were renegotiated on the initiative of the pastoralist elders, which led to different social arrangements (e.g., being invited to eat with the young warriors), thereby allowing the researcher to build productive research relations with *morans*. Discussions with informants may even lead to new frames of mobility that may not necessarily be in line with their feelings and experiences. One telling example comes from the first project, where one the authors accompanied a Gambian man to the Duomo square in Milan. When he started to take pictures of the Duomo square, the researcher semi-jokingly referred to his tourist-like behaviour. For this informant, tourism was an entirely new framework with which to perceive his mobility in Europe.

Still, with this above notion of enacting, the question of consent becomes more complicated. How should

we deal with informed consent when situations are on the move? As one of our anonymous reviewers posed: "Can refugees or undocumented migrants provide truly informed consent to participating in research, given the precariousness of their situations?" (see discussions in Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007). Considering these challenges and sensitivities, it is, in our view, vital to remain reflective of the 'doings' of research, also in connection in relation to research participants, to make clear that the research itself is a process open to mistakes, change and contestation.

5. Conclusion

As mobilities studies became a well-respected field in social science, discussions on mobile research designs and mobile methods followed. Usually, these discussions were part of empirical papers and reveal specific methodological choices of individual researchers, or groups of researchers sharing the same objectives and questions. This article took a different approach. It is based on continuous discussions between four researchers who developed their own versions of mobility-driven projects, starting from different disciplinary backgrounds, having different research objectives, and having applied different techniques in the field. Although the writing process of this article was not always easy, the discussions were fruitful as they touched upon some of our implicit knowledge and biases.

In concluding, we would like to re-visit the questions we raised in the introduction. Firstly, in terms of whether we produce different knowledge, the four authors tend to agree (albeit for different reasons) that their mobile methodologies have great heuristic potential and provide different knowledge to place-bound and/or interview-based research designs. The methods used allowed the researchers (albeit to different degrees) to practice mobility and to reveal mobility-immobility relations that otherwise would remain hidden. All four projects went beyond ex-post reconstructions of people's movements, creating more space for, among others, ambivalence to, and redirections of, mobility. The second question on how messy realities relate to our methodologies critiques the notion that good research designs are pre-planned, fixed and inflexible. Research processes might themselves have an itinerant character (Aparna, 2020) and serendipity might indeed be much more valued in research approaches (e.g., Rivoal & Salazar, 2013). Mobile methodologies allow for some space of openness, as researchers often do not know where they will end up, in both geographical and analytical terms. The final question relates to mobility as an unequally distributed resource. Our research relations articulated this difference, rather than providing a solution to it. Moving together may imply more intimacy and may deepen research relationships, which can help to create more transparency and reflection in the realm of research, including with the informants of the research themselves. At the same time, our relations with research participants remain unequal in terms of mobility potentials, and we may therefore not be able to fully represent their experiences.

In the end, we regard this article as an invitation to other researchers of mobility to contrast her/his own 'doings' with those of others. As in our case, that might entail showing mistakes or fallacies of the research, but at the same time allows research to remain self-reflective. This is not only valuable in terms of the transparency of specific methodologies, but it can also be a critical mirror for each person involved in this discussion and a way forward to address the politics of mobility. In the metaphorical sense—and we stick to mobility related terminology here—standing still in a process of movement can be very productive. This implies that we should not always go with the flow of the everyday, of larger PhD trajectories, or post-doc careers. We might stand still and ask ourselves what we are doing in the first place, and for whom.

Acknowledgments

We thank the participants of the "International Symposium on Environmental Change, Im/Mobilities, and Migration'' held at Wageningen University (June 2019) for their feedback on our ideas; the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions to further improve the article; and Cebuan Bliss for editing our article to improve the English language. This research was funded by: Two Veni Grants of the Dutch Research Council (NWO, Grant Number: 451-16-030; 451-14-011); the Fonds des Donations of the University of Neuchâtel; a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action "Resilience in East African Landscapes" (REAL) Innovative Training Network funded by the European Commission (FP7-PEOPLE-2013-ITN project no. 606879). The first two authors took the lead in constructing this article with an equal contribution.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Adey, P. (2017). *Mobility* (2nd Ed.). London and New York, NY: Routledge.

Aparna, K. (2020). *Enacting asylum university: Politics of research encounters and (re)producing borders in asylum relations* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Radboud University, the Netherlands.

Aparna, K., Schapendonk, J., & Merlín-Escorza, C. E. (2020). Method as border: Tuning in to the cacophony of academic backstages of migration, mobility and border studies. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 110–115.

Benson, M. (2011). The movement beyond (lifestyle) migration: Mobile practices and the constitution of a better way of life. *Mobilities*, *6*(2), 221–235.

Blondin, S. (2020). Understanding involuntary immobility in the Bartang Valley of Tajikistan through the prism of motility. *Mobilities*, *15*(4). https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2020.1746146

Boas, I. (2019). *Using mobile methods to trace networks and connections: Environmental migration in the digital age*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Research Methods Cases in Political Science and International Relations. Retrieved from http://methods.sagepub.com/case/mobile-to-trace-networks-environmental-migration-in-the-digital-age

Boas, I. (2020). Social networking in a digital and mobile world: The case of environmentally-related migration in Bangladesh. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(7), 1330–1347.

Büscher, M., & Urry, J. (2009). Mobile methods and the empirical. *European Journal of Social Theory*, *12*(1), 99–116.

Cabot, H. (2016). "Refugee voices": Tragedy, ghosts, and the anthropology of not knowing. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *45*(6), 645–672.

Carte, L., Schmook, B., Radel, C., & Johnson, R. (2019). The slow displacement of smallholder farming families: Land, hunger, and labor migration in Nicaragua and Guatemala. *Land*, *8*(6), https://doi.org/10.3390/land8060089

Clifford, J. (1997). *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Cook, M., & Edensor, T. (2017). Cycling through dark space: Apprehending landscape otherwise. *Mobilities*, *12*(1), 1–19.

D'Andrea, A., Ciolfi, L., & Gray, B. (2011). Methodological challenges and innovations in mobilities research. *Mobilities*, *6*(2), 149–160.

Davidson, A. C. (2020). Radical mobilities. *Progress in Human Geography*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519899472

Elliot, A., Norum, R., & Salazar, N. B. (Eds). (2017). *Methodologies of mobility: Ethnography and experiment*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Faria, C., & Mollett, S. (2016). Critical feminist reflexivity and the politics of whiteness in the 'field.' *Gender, Place & Culture*, *23*(1), 79–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.958065

Gaibazzi, P. (2015). *Bush bound: Young men and rural permanence in migrant West Africa*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Gielis, R. (2009). A global sense of migrant places: Towards a place perspective in the study of migrant transnationalism. *Global Networks*, *9*(2), 271–287.

Goldstein, M. C., & Beall, C. M. (1987). Anthropological fieldwork in Tibet studying nomadic pastoralists on the Changtang. *HIMALAYA, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, *7*(1), 1–4.

Harrell-Bond, B., & Voutira, E. (2007). In search of 'invisible' actors: Barriers to access in refugee research. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *20*(2), 281–298.

Hein, J. R., Evans, J., & Jones, P. (2008). Mobile methodologies: Theory, technology and practice. *Geography Compass*, *2*(5), 1266–1285.

Khosravi, S. (2018). Afterword. Experiences and stories along the way. *Geoforum*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.05.021

Law, J., & Urry, J. (2004). Enacting the social. *Economy and Society*, *33*(3), 390–410.

Lems, A. (2020). Phenomenology of exclusion: Capturing the everyday thresholds of belonging. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 116–125.

Malkki, L. H. (1995). Refugees and exile: From "refugee studies" to the national order of things. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *24*(1), 495–523.

Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *24*(1), 95–117.

Merriman, P. (2014). *Rethinking mobile methods*. Mobilities, 9(2), 167–187.

Okely, J. (1983). *The traveller-gypsies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pas, A. (2018). Governing grazing and mobility in the Samburu Lowlands, Kenya. *Land*, *7*(2). https://doi.org/10.3390/land7020041

Pas Schrijver, A. (2019). *Pastoralism, mobility and conservation. Shifting rules of access and control of grazing resources in Kenya's northern drylands* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). University of Stockholm, Sweden.

Pellis, A., Pas, A., & Duineveld, M. (2018). The persistence of tightly coupled conflicts. The case of Loisaba, Kenya. *Conservation and Society*, *16*(4), 387–396.

Reeves, M. (2011). Staying put? Towards a relational politics of mobility at a time of migration. *Central Asian Survey*, *30*(3/4), 555–576.

Rivoal, I., & Salazar, N. B. (2013). Contemporary ethnographic practice and the value of serendipity. *Social Anthropology*, *21*(2), 178–185.

Schapendonk, J. (2020). *Finding ways through Eurospace. West African movers re-viewing Europe from the inside*. Oxford: Berghahn Books

Schapendonk, J., Liempt, I., Schwarz, I., & Steel, G. (2018). Re-routing migration geographies: Migrants, trajectories and mobility regimes. *Geoforum*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/sj.geoforum.2018.06.007

Schapendonk, J., Bolay, M., & Dahinden, J. (2020). The conceptual limits of the 'migration journey.' De-exceptionalising mobility in the context of West African trajectories. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1804191

Simone, A. (2019). *Improvised lives: Rhythms of endurance in an urban south*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Spencer, P. (1973). *Nomads in alliance. Symbiosis and growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spinney, J. (2006). A place of sense: A kinaesthetic ethnog-

raphy of cyclists on Mont Ventoux. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *24*(5), 709–732.
Spinney, J. (2011). A chance to catch a breath: Using mobile video ethnography in cycling research. *Mobilities*, *6*(2), 161–182.
Stock, I. (2019). *Time, migration and forced immobility*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
Urry, J. (2007). *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
van Geel, J., & Mazzucato, V. (2018). Conceptualising youth mobility trajectories: Thinking beyond conventional categories. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(13), 2144–2162.
van Liempt, I., & Bilger, V. (Eds.) (2009). *The ethics of migration research methodology. Dealing with vulnerable immigrants*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.
Vergunst, J. (2011). Technology and technique in a useful ethnography of movement. *Mobilities*, *6*(2), 203–219.
Wiegel, H., Boas, I., & Warner, J. (2019). A mobilities perspective on migration in the context of environmental change. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, *10*(6). https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.610
Wilson, M. C. W. (2018). Spatial mobility and social becoming: The journeys of four Central African students in Congo-Kinshasa. *Geoforum*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.05.018

About the Authors

Ingrid Boas is an Associate Professor at the Environmental Policy Group of Wageningen University. She researches intersections between environmental change, mobilities and governance. In 2016, Ingrid was awarded a personal Veni Grant with the Netherlands Scientific Organization to study environmental migration in the digital age. Ingrid's work has appeared, amongst others, in Global Environmental Politics, the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Nature Climate Change, and in the monograph (Routledge, 2015) examining the securitisation of climate migration.

Joris Schapendonk is Assistant Professor at the Geography, Planning and Environment department of Radboud University and an active member of Nijmegen Centre for Border Research (NCBR). His research concentrates on im/mobility trajectories, borders and migration industries. His work is published in, among others, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (2014), *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2018; 2020) and *Geoforum* (2018). His latest book, *Finding Ways in Eurospace* (2020), is published by Berghahn Books (https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/SchapendonkFinding)

Suzy Blondin is a PhD Candidate and Teaching Assistant at the Institute of Geography of the University of Neuchâtel. Her doctoral work focusses on rural-urban mobilities in the Pamir mountains of Tajikistan. She focusses specifically on immobility, motility and place attachment in the context of environmental risks. Her work has recently been published in Mobilities and the Central Asian Survey.

Annemiek Pas has recently finalized her PhD dissertation based on the shifting politics of pastoral resource access in relation to the large-scale establishment of community conservancies in Kenya. Building upon her past research in the realm of natural resources governance, she is interested to empirically study and theorise on processes of ongoing rural reconfigurations and evolving property regimes—at the interface of governmental policies and local realities—studying local communities' perceptions of, and responses to, these processes of change.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2020, Volume 8, Issue 4, Pages 147–156
DOI: 10.17645/si.v8i4.3363

Article

(Re)Searching with Imperial Eyes: Collective Self-Inquiry as a Tool for Transformative Migration Studies

Madeline J. Bass *, Daniel Córdoba and Peter Teunissen

MOVES EJD, Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy, FU Berlin, 14195 Berlin, Germany;
E-Mails: madeline.bass@fu-berlin.de (M.J.B.), daniec78@zedat.fu-berlin.de (D.C.), p.teunissen@fu-berlin.de (P.T.)

* Corresponding author

Submitted: 15 June 2020 | Accepted: 10 August 2020 | Published: 19 November 2020

Abstract
Migration scholars, and the universities and institutions who fund them, at times neglect to address the ways in which the traces of the imperial past, and references to the 'post' colonial serve to obfuscate and legitimize discriminatory practices in their work. The 'imperial eyes' of the academy set the terms and limitations on interactions, locations, and relationality in research, reducing the agency of migrants, producing stratified configurations in the positionality of both migrants and researchers and, subsequently, exacerbating dynamics of exclusion and extraction. As early-stage researchers, we see a critical need for an approach to migration studies which undermines the ongoing impact of colonialism and the normativity of institutionalized, hierarchical narratives that haunt academia. Our research builds on the work of scholars who write about the autonomy of migration, liberation theorists, and critical Indigenous perspectives, but our positions are also influenced by those on the 'frontlines' resisting various manifestations of violence and exclusion. In this article, using an interdisciplinary model, we propose the notion of collective self-inquiry to critically question and inquire into our own methods and approaches and provide a set of methodological tools that can be applied by other researchers within and outside of the university. These tools invite us to work collectively and look more critically at the b/ordering of movement(s) across former empires, thus helping us navigate towards the undercommons, a place where the liberatory potential of the academy can be realized.

Keywords
imperial eyes; collective self-inquiry; migration studies; neoliberal university; post-colonialism; undercommons

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe" edited by Kolar Aparna (Radboud University, The Netherlands), Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, The Netherlands) and Cesar Merlín-Escorza (Radboud University, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction

Jodi Byrd, writing about the 'transit of empire,' describes a conversation she had with her late father (Byrd, 2011). "We [Indigenous peoples] didn't have time, money, or power," he tells her (Byrd, 2011, p. xii). And though Byrd, a Chickasaw writer and academic, wants to argue back, to talk of negotiations and resources, she eventually finds that there is something fundamentally true in his words, particularly within academic, literary, cultural, and political figurations (Byrd, 2011, p. xii). Turning to this research collective, the authors of this article, and our place in the academy, the circumstances could not be more different. None of us are Indigenous, two of us come from former colonial empires, and the third was raised in a settler colonial state. Though we dedicate our time, money, and power to community organizing and activism work, as doctoral students at our prestigious, internationally-known universities, working for a European Union-funded Horizon 2020 Project, riding the waves of the 'migration industry' (Andersson, 2014; Cabot, 2019; Cranston, Schapendonk, & Spaan, 2018),

and as EU citizens, these three resources (time, money, and power) remain readily available to us. This privilege situates us often in contrast with the migrants and people in transit who we work with. But to what ends? How do we spend our time, what do we do with our money, and are we willing to share any of our power in this pursuit?

Power and privilege are hallmarks of western academia, a historically elitist institution that looks through 'imperial eyes,' producing research through which "the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized" (Smith, 2012, p. 8). The imperial eyes of the academy set terms and limitations on interactions and make claims of sterile objectivity and neutrality in research which diminish the agency of migrants, produce stratified configurations, and, subsequently, exacerbate the dynamics of exclusion in these relationships. In the context of EUrope, research justifies and propels forward discrimination and Eurocentrism. As EUrope fuels chaos and conflict around the world (Akkerman, 2016, 2018), people move through the securitized, selective, and deadly EUropean migration regime(s) (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, & Tsianos, 2008). The "waiting, detention, relations, suffrage—and even deaths—have become a profitable business" (Franck, 2018, p. 201) and knowledge production is one branch of this industry (Cabot, 2019). In 2017 alone the European Commission announced that they had reserved EUR 200 million, to be used from 2018–2020, for research proposals that would predict and manage migration flows and "tackle migration challenges" (European Commission, 2017). It is from this fund that we as early-stage researchers 'enjoy' our paycheck.

The imperial eyes of Europe are well-funded, rigid, and restrictive. As early-stage researchers with liberatory intent, we must seek to challenge the normativity of institutionalized, colonial narratives, and the 'b/ordering' of movement(s) of people across former empires (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002). Given these challenges, is our intended decolonial vision sufficient, or are we actually undertaking research with "imperial eyes?" (Smith, 2012). Our positions are problematized by our inability to reside solely in spaces of struggle, the frontlines that are the beginnings of decolonial space, requiring upkeep and radical inclusion in order to counteract the differential inclusion of migration regimes (Ahmed, 2000; Casas-Cortes et al., 2015; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2014; Papadopoulos & Tsianos, 2013). The work of this upkeep, a labor of love, is made more difficult by the violent power of the university institution, but it is not foreclosed altogether.

We will begin this article by outlining some of the essential theoretical frameworks for our research and the methodological tools we used. This will be followed by selected passages from our researcher vignettes, created during focus group sessions. This research model was inspired by the work of Indigenous scholar Madeline Whetung (Nishnaabeg) and non-Indigenous academic Sara Wakefield and their collective reflection (Whetung & Wakefield, 2019). The academic institution is only one branch of empire, and our research is only a few lines on one grant-funded project embedded within the billions of euros dedicated to researching migrants and their movements. But rather than being an instrument for migration management within the colonial context of EUropean migration (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Saucier & Woods, 2014), we are attempting to model a research design that takes tools from the research institution (e.g., funding, infrastructures, methodological frameworks), and uses them for liberatory purposes. This article is a discussion of how we aim to engage with research, as operationalized through our collaborative approach. We use collective self-inquiry in order to undermine the academy's imperial eyes, which produce stratified configurations in the positionality of migrants and researchers, while exacerbating hierarchies within the university. This method helps us instead to move, together, towards a university space that refuses the divisive forces of academia. As we aim to demonstrate in this article, collective self-inquiry allows us to detect and undermine our position within the migration industry by moving together towards a more liberatory practice of doing research. We hope that our reflection, presented in this article, will be helpful for other collectives and researchers who want to work within and alongside academia.

1.1. Who We Are/Where We Stand

We are all classifiable as economic migrants, and despite our transnational and liberatory intentions EUrope continues to force itself to the forefront of our research, our relationships to its imperial practices adding a necessary politicization to our work. From teaching in Oromia, to working in social struggles in Madrid, and with grassroots organizations across the Mediterranean, each of the researchers has been navigating, subverting, and grappling with imperial legacies that haunt Migration Studies today. There are some significant differences in our approaches to research and our call to work with a liberatory methodology. Daniel has worked as a migrant and with migrants across EUropean space as a researcher and political activist, while expanding on solidarity practices that cross North and South. Peter took his research to the borderlands of this EUropean space to uncover its violent b/ordering practices, contesting both the migration (knowledge) industry and his position within it. Both beyond and despite these borders, Madeline has been struggling against the afterlives of imperialism that displace Black diasporic peoples in the academy and the metropole. Despite our differences, we share a commitment to producing research that pushes towards political change and refuse to accept our privilege without attempting redistribution or redress.

In an attempt to redefine the procedures of academic production we have included a series of what we call 'interludes' drawn from our recorded group conversa-

tions, which have an important function both within the scope and structure of this specific article and as part of the larger methodological process we are proposing (for more information see Section 3). Pairing more stylized academic writing with the interludes, which are rawer and more organic, works to humanize and bring life into our article. Along this same vein, the interludes serve to make more clear not just the end result of collective self-inquiry as a practice, but also in a very practical sense, to elucidate the ways in which the process was carried out, and the passionate, sometimes messy backstory behind collective work. As a whole, this article is an exploration of the academy's potential for liberatory practices through the development of alternative methodologies which emphasize community, affinity, and shared knowledge.

Interlude: From the focus group

Having the conversation this organic way, without having access to theory and cites and all that…it might be something interesting to consider.

2. Theoretical Background

The university is an institution which uses research as a management tool, as conceptualized by la paperson, Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, and countless others. The university that la paperson describes runs on "desires for a colonizer's future" while, paradoxically, containing resources that can be rearranged to build a subversive, decolonial alternative (la paperson, 2017, p. xiii). As a research collective we hope to reassemble scraps from the colonial machine, as la paperson (2017, p. 53) would say, or steal some time, money, and power from the university (after Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 26). We aim to challenge the imperial logic of western academia by developing relations of cooperation with our colleagues and the people we engage with, based on reciprocity. In the undercommons of this university, what hooks (1984) famously called the margin, there is the opportunity for particular types of liberatory relationships that co-opt and subvert imperial ways of using time, money, and power. This undercommon sensibility refuses the extractivism of the academy.

In defining western academia, it is crucial to acknowledge both its oppressive effects, and the transformative potential it contains. la paperson's notion of the first, second, and third university is useful to conceptualize this behemoth, its violent tendencies, and the ways in which we can undermine its operations for more liberatory ends. The first university is in an intimate partnership with military, capitalist neocolonial industrial complexes (Kumar, 2017; la paperson, 2017, p. 37). It produces knowledge that justifies particular post-empire forms of governance, it is involved in the formation of subjectivities which reproduce socio-economic imbalances rooted in colonial domination, it funds researchers and disciplines with colonial tendencies, and it uses the academic machine to maintain global societal hierarchies (see also Mann, 2008; Spillers, 1987; Tuck & Yang, 2012). For example, a recent study shows how European universities and major security and defense companies have longstanding relations "in terms of supporting graduate programmes, sponsoring students, funding research programmes, adopting research findings of academics and making it marketable" (Kumar, 2017, pp. 131–132). The first university uses imperial eyes to frame certain migrants and people on the move as 'problems' (Casas-Cortes et al., 2015), while framing other migrants as workers that supply the EUropean economy with its needed workforce (European Commission, 2015; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2014). Alongside this framing, EUropean research funding is directed towards the defense industry to develop border control technologies (European Commission, 2016) and to conduct research that aims to create institutional and so-called "global solutions" to the "refugee-crisis" (European Commission, 2017). First university positionalities have created the dominant framework for conducting research within the field of Migration Studies, producing knowledge that has emerged from environments where logics of extractivism and elitism (as argued by Cabot, 2019; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2019) are prioritized.

This brings us to what la paperson describes as the second university, a site of critique, which although important to generating conversation, lacks real action. The second university is held back by a "hidden curriculum" (la paperson, 2017, p. 42) that sets the terms and limitations of interactions, locations, and the so-called sterile objectivity and neutrality of research. This serves, even if inadvertently, to reduce the agency of migrants and produces stratified configurations that exacerbate the dynamics of exclusion in these relationships. We are currently part of the MOVES European Joint Doctorate, an EU/Horizon 2020/Marie Curie Scholarship-funded program, located within both the first and the second domain that la paperson describes, with listed intentions around policy development but no guarantee that these critiques will produce the real, necessary change that makes this world more liveable (see also Sharpe, 2014; Walcott, 2019). This lack of concrete action is part of "a generosity [that] is afforded to white European male theorists for accomplishing work in an area (namely, race/gender) for which they have no documented commitments or track record for engaging" (King, 2015, p. 131). In our collective, Daniel and Peter, as white European male researchers working with migrating peoples, need to give critical attention to their own positionality, or risk recreating the imperial eyes of the first university (Smith, 2012). Critiques of a similar phenomenon can also be found in the work of Goldman (2005) and Cabot (2019), both pieces reminding us of the necessity of keeping research under scrutiny.

Contrasting with these formations, la paperson's (2017, p. 44) third university is a strategic space of hope,

futurity, and possible liberation, composed of members of the university who refuse to abandon their communities, ideologies, and decolonial intentions in their academic work. The third university is not restricted to the academic setting and its researchers, who too often become trapped within and between the first and the second university. Instead, we move towards the third university in community practices and activist organizing, alongside our work in the university. Following Harney and Moten (2013, p. 26), when we work towards the third university we enter "into the underground, the downlow low-down maroon community of the university, into the *undercommons*," a collective space of enunciation and action. Though the academy works to individualize and isolate us, the undercommon sensibility encourages collective work that brings our different worlds together. The third university engages in transformative praxis alongside and with commitment to marginalized peoples to produce "knowledges part of, and tools for, social and political struggle" (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2013, p. 246). Groups like Border Monitoring, Super Futures Haunt Qollective, Asylum University, and the research done by Bejarano, Juárez, Garcia, and Goldstein (2019) are examples of partnerships working alongside, within, and beyond the academy in their research endeavors.

Interlude: From the focus group

The university, the academic setting, they produce questions about my research, but I have my own questions. (February 2020, Berlin)

I like that you were asking questions about positionality, about power relations, about how to escape these imbalances of power that are a part of who we are, and being located where we are. (March 2020, Berlin)

3. Methodology: When the Researcher Becomes the Researched

Given these theoretical reflections, we seek to provide tools through which other people embedded in academia can better conduct research that moves to the reconciliatory space of the third university. This has led us to collectively turn the gaze onto ourselves, critically questioning our methods and our relationships with our participants, and ultimately, to develop this process of collective self-inquiry. When we started shaping this research process, we were unaware of the precise form it would take. Throughout the process we thus drew on several specific methodological tools, which make it replicable for a broad audience across (and despite) the university and provide a practical approach to engage with 'the field.' We will outline a few of these, briefly, here.

As mentioned above, Madeline Whetung (Nishnaabeg) and Sara Wakefield, an Indigenous MA student and a Geography Professor who recorded and transcribed their discussions, provided us with a model to structure our conversation (Whetung & Wakefield, 2019). In their methodological approach, they engage in a fruitful dialogue in order to unmask how marginalized positionalities face oppressive relations that are often hidden behind 'ethical' research protocols. It was through their conversation that they were able to come up with collective answers to undermine those conditions, which would have otherwise remained inaccessible to them. Similarly, Aparna, Kramsch, Mahamed, and Deenen (2017), who are in the academy and the frontlines, used the conversationality of their research 'vignettes' to bring individual experiences into collective biographies. Their work elucidated the shared struggle of the fight for "intellectual space in refugee camps," moving knowledge beyond the borders of academia (Aparna et al., 2017, p. 436). We borrowed the notion of a research vignette to illustrate previous research experiences and how they intersect with our own backgrounds to shape our research.

In all of the pieces discussed above, despite their divergent approaches, we may identify a shared affinity for undercommon, third university work. Rather than emerging based on shared disciplinary or methodological concerns, these affinities, as we call them, were the origin point of our collective. Affinities create "natural invitations" to participate and might be described as a "true act of love" (C. Merlin, personal correspondence, 28 May 2020). These affinities are shared views that emerge and show themselves in academic work, daily lived experiences, and even in the more mundane aspects of the ways we live and build community. Because our research collective was built from inside the larger academic institution, we sought to combine our strengths and mitigate some of our weaknesses using a collective process of self-inquiry.

Collective self-inquiry is a methodological tool that critically questions our own methods and approaches, inviting us to work collectively and better understand the b/ordering of movement(s) of people across former empires. In practice, we used collective self-inquiry to question our positionalities and privileges, discuss and analyze the impacts of these imperial eyes within our work, and counteract these tendencies. In more methodological terms, collective self-inquiry may be thought of as a heuristic model that could help us to identify the traces of the imperial past, and uncover the discriminatory practices in our work. Because of its collective character, this approach undermines the constraints and individualizing tendencies that academic institutions impose upon those navigating their complex waters (Gill, 2010; Nash & Owens, 2015). In this regard it differs from self-reflection broadly defined by feminist scholars (Sultana, 2007) and autoethnography as self-interview (Crawley, 2012), as it does not centralize the individual in the analysis. Instead, in our approach, collective self-inquiry follows the discussion of pieces like Whetung and Wakefield (2019), Kumsa, Chambon, Yan,

and Maiter's (2015) conversation on the messiness of group reflection, and the notion of dialogical ethnography (Butler, 2009; Group FIC, 2005). All of these groups use shared reflective questioning and analysis to emphasize how dialogue and discussion shape and change positions. From this perspective, collective self-inquiry can be an important tool for those people engaging with collective practices of knowledge production, participatory action researchers (Del Vecchio, Toomey, & Tuck, 2017), and other researchers in academia who want to navigate towards more liberatory, undercommon research practices.

To accomplish our collective self-inquiry approach we organized three micro-focus groups where we discussed our theoretical frameworks, research experiences, and positionalities. These focus groups were held in our office, a shared space and 'neutral' ground where we each felt comfortable. Each group meeting was recorded, and these recordings were uploaded to a shared digital drive. The key element of these focus groups, embedded throughout, was the sharing, mutuality, and sociality of their operation. Focus groups run the risk of replicating the divergences between researcher and research population in the process of collecting data (K. Aparna, personal correspondence, 2020). Our focus groups undermined this tendency by distributing power and voice equally and consensually, and positioning the group as a subject which demanded inquiry. The other crucial aspect of these groups was an attempt to build a shared language and foundation of knowledge regarding the complex and sensitive issues we sought to approach, including borders, migration, movement, transnationality, diaspora, and the way these elements are read and written in the academy. In the collective biographical practice of Gannon et al. (2015, p. 192), this process is called the creation of a shared "conceptual apparatus." For our work, shared language included theoretical understandings as well as a collective interpretation of particular terms. What Daniel describes as *resistencia*, Peter may name as *verzet*; both words speak to the transformation of the inhuman, and all three of us feel in them the burning need for change. The process of putting these understandings in conversation with each other was a way of building theory as well as working on the specifics of our methodological praxis within the academy.

In the first phase of the research, during the groups discussed above, we shared ideas that influence our research and politics. Selecting these concepts allowed for each individual in the collective to connect their current work and research practices to the outside knowledge of their lived and affective experiences (Ewing, 2018). During these discussions we reflected upon issues of positionality and power relations in order to build a collective narrative. The second phase represented the core of our collective work, where we wrote vignettes about our personal backgrounds, and analyzed these with our individual theoretical lenses. This connected our singular histories with the foundation of collective knowledge that we produced in the previous phase. We recorded and transcribed our work sessions and incorporated the ideas and frictions that grew out of these meetings back into the article through the interludes and the vignettes. The vignettes and analysis shared here are a written and condensed version of our conversations.

Interlude: From the focus group

We live in a white supremacist world. I can be a little more subtle about that but I'm not gonna pretend that there are class differences when it's white people on top.

(overlapping voices in response)

4. Vignettes: A Critical Take on Research through Lived Experiences

The following excerpts come from our researcher vignettes. In reading the vignettes, the reader is encouraged to notice a few essential ideas, growing from our earlier discussion of the first, second, and third university, and the way these formations take shape in our lived experiences and research practices. These themes relate more generally to community, reciprocality, and intentionality. In addition to being central organizing ideas for this article, the concepts are demonstrative of the imperial eyes of the academy, and the risks of migration research. We include excerpts from the vignettes here as a possible step for other scholars to follow within the larger practice of collective self-inquiry.

Vignette—Madeline

I made an Addis Ababa taxi driver cry in 2016, a few weeks after Irreecha, the Oromo Thanksgiving. It started with a series of questions. Informal questions, back and forth, occasionally locking eyes in the rearview mirror. I can speak Afan Oromo, his mother tongue, but I'm a Black American. He asks me how I learned the language, what I'm doing there, how I like it. I tell him I live in a village, out West. I'm teaching 9th grade, but I'm also a student, getting my M.S. in Sociology. I'm in the city because I have to be in the city, because the governments I work for have decided the village is no longer safe. 250 Oromos were killed a few weeks ago, just an hour south of here, while celebrating Thanksgiving [see Human Rights Watch, 2017]. We don't need to talk about that to talk about that. Instead I ask him—Where did you grow up? When did you move to the city? How do you like it? 250 Oromos were killed, an hour south of there, just a few weeks before; this is where he grew up, it is why he moved to this city, it is something he can't like, can't be fine with, but must. I think about being in America and seeing another police killing of another Black boy, of 'our' Black American president drone striking Somalis, of

our staggering inability to make up for those wounds. This is fall of 2016, in Ethiopia's capital city and I'm supposed to be doing research for this master's thesis about Oromo lives in a settler colonial state. Instead, in the taxi, we whisper to each other *haa jabaanu*, let's be strong, and *suuta suuta*, slowly change will come. Maybe if he tells this story, it is him who made me cry.

Vignette—Daniel

In 2002, I was part of a diverse collective running a squatted social center. *El Laboratorio*, as it was called, was at the core of the struggles claiming the right to city and rejecting the neoliberal recipes which from the early 90s were organizing life in Madrid, my hometown. *El Laboratorio* was for me not only a space for political intervention, but also the opportunity to approach theory from a very situated political praxis. Even more, during that time, it provided me with a very strong feeling of belonging. Almost twenty years after this experience, I found myself in a different squat in Barcelona, *el Espacio del Migrante*, one run by migrant people. Only this time I was not there as an activist, but as a researcher, and I was trying to 'recruit' participants for my master's thesis research. It felt somehow awkward. Sitting around a table with a few other people, I started talking with an experienced activist from Mexico and explaining about my research. He was very receptive and in the end he ended up collaborating with me, but he was also clear that in *el Espacio* they distrust academic settings, and see the university as an institution more concerned with its own position and with putting the production of knowledge at service of the dynamics of capital reproduction than questioning the structures of domination and inequality that are at its core. The fact that I actually agreed with him did not allow me to feel completely comfortable.

Vignette—Peter

In 2018, less than two years after the implementation of EU-Turkey-statement, I traveled, like many journalists, researchers, NGOs, volunteers, and activists to the Greek/Turkish borderland with both a sense of anger and solidarity. Anger, because the tragedy unfolding at the gateways of Europe is a direct consequence of European policies that opened the internal borders of Europe and gave me the privilege of a 'mobile' Dutch European citizen. Solidarity to support 'migrant/refugees' on their journey and to organize against the violence of European border regimes. I was actively working and collaborating with a group composed of independent volunteers, activists, and scholars who support people in detention and who are pending their deportation, and document the deportation process of Lesvos. One day, during my fieldwork, I was walking around the Olive Grove, the informal encampment of the official Hotspot Camp Moria, when Fawad and Mo, two men from Algeria, invited me for a cup of tea. Like Fawad and Mo, most people who traveled to EUrope from countries that share a colonial history with EUrope were classified with an economic profile, and could be detained and deported based solely on their citizenship. We had been drinking our tea in silence for a few minutes, when a man from Togo joined us. "Why am I here? Europeans came to my country. You took everything and now I am here in this mess," he said, pointing to the surroundings of Moria Camp. While observing my surroundings, I could not do more than silently nod and agree. Although a short encounter, and despite that my research in Lesvos was a practice of solidarity, I know that I may have an active role in constituting and reiterating the relations of power that I critique, and these reflections continue to linger in my thoughts and direct my work as an Early Stage Researcher.

Interlude: From the focus group

> Creation of knowledge is not the most important thing. The most important thing is to support or to show solidarity with people you engage with.

5. Vignette Analysis

What follows is a sample from our focus group conversations, rewritten and shaped into a more formally structured analysis. While we built our initial frame around the notion of the imperial eyes and la paperson's first university, particular issues were of more importance in each analysis. In general, we focused on the first university through the lens of accumulation and extraction, operationalized the second through its over-reliance on critique without action, and identified the third in its strategic actions, which build a more liberatory future. When we joined together in critique, these personal stances helped to build a more effective collective assessment. This framework allowed us to analyze and unpack our positionalities in relation to the liberatory work we aim for.

Interlude: Dialogues on the research process

> We still have a lack of clear answers, but I'm not sure it's feasible [to get them]. Maybe we aim instead to pose good questions, and clear questions, and questions that will be able to guide our process of researching.

> I disagree. It's not enough to say, hey I have these privileges. You need to make it actionable. You need to say what you're doing about it. Convince us that working to answer these questions is really important to you.

> Not just that you're posing them. That you're really working to solve them. (March 2020, Berlin)

Madeline's vignette is an example of the way liberatory thinking and decolonial desires remain haunted by ongoing forms of imperialism. Throughout much of the vignette, the author is situated in a third space, working with, caring for, even crying alongside the communities that the research is being undertaken with. From this positionality, she describes in clear terms the myriad forms of harm the academy is responsible for, including, most presciently, an over-saturation of white scholars in the industry who refuse to allow her life, and Black diasporic lives, to 'matter,' denying both meaning and corporeal presence. The danger in this focus, though, is relying too much on second university tools to perform action; pointed critique is not always paired with strategic action. Furthermore, and more dangerously, the post-empire who is paying for her work is quite clearly its own brutal force, as she links USian state violence in the Horn of Africa to the funding for the education project she is supporting. But it remains unclear how and when this force reveals itself, and if it can be so easily set aside. Reconciling these tensions requires a closer attention to action, and its potential power. It could be argued that Madeline must go beyond focusing on feeling and sharing stories, and take the step of buying "back an acre of settler land" (as she describes it) in order to truly build the liberatory futures that are otherwise only dreams.

Daniel, positions his own experiences as an activist migrant-worker in parallel to his research population. In contrast to Madeline, Daniel worked outside state institutions and aimed for a degree of "militancy" to design research according to a "beneficial and mutually enriching relationships." By developing a "common plane" of difference, Daniel argues for a strategic approach to push for radical, third university-building change, however, it remains unclear how this strategic plane is developed. How does he intend to move from collective organization towards a more just world? Accepting differences is merely one side of the story, how does one relate, reflect upon, and reconsider the power relations that are re-enacted through these differences? In his vignette, Daniel describes himself as a "white, middle-aged, male, university researcher from Spain" in contrast with the "migrant and racialized women working in the domestic sector" he researches. Why is he allowed careful details, while the others are reduced to a vaguely "racialized" other? These ways of framing raise troubling questions about the impact of the first university, even in research taken with liberatory intent. Beyond these shortcomings, Daniel shows a well formulated criticism of the academic and institutional structures that limit the possibilities of transformative research, and quite thoroughly reflects on the implications of his role as researcher. Although Daniel's strategic considerations are important steps to move beyond the boundaries of the second university they are at times entangled with first university thinking, requiring still a more careful analysis of the practices of re/b/ordering that are being manifested within the plane of difference.

Peter tries to reconcile his work as a researcher and his aim to turn research as a means for social struggle, despite the risk of "reiterating relations of power" that oppress migrants. In this sense, he attempts to engage in third university practices by considering research as a responsible political action, working to undermine the coloniality of the academic institution and its role in the migration industry, and tackling the power asymmetries that render migrants into objects of research. This practice is undertaken with a clear sense of commitment for social transformation, as Peter describes how he was actively fighting and organizing against the violence of European border regimes. However, a very important aspect of the third university is apparently missing; a personal engagement with the people he is trying to support, and the means to develop and strengthen community ties. Moreover, generalizing terminology, such as the vague framing of 'migrants/refugees,' shows elements of the dehumanizing and extractivist first university he critiques. In this sense, despite its potential, Peter is using tools and thinking that have not yet managed to move fully beyond a second university critical frame.

The vignettes, generally, trigger important and strategic questions about our positions as researchers, the 'imperial eyes' that influence research, and how we engage with the communities we work with. A common concern towards liberation was evident across the analyses, though, as the critiques show, with the benefit of collective knowledge these concerns become sharpened, strengthened, and more effective. Also illuminating are the ways in which migration, movement, and the empires who facilitate them create shifting power positionalities that affect the research process. In Madeline's work the lurking presence of the US empire remained unaddressed, Daniel failed to rigorously or carefully build community in pursuit of academia, and Peter similarly showed an over-reliance on a loosely-defined solidarity that seemed to lack a human element. Through collective work and conversation, each analysis saw opportunities to identify and dismantle the imperializing tendencies of research in the academy, and places where members of the collective were instead in danger of upholding its colonial values as we described previously in the article. The collective self-inquiry we engaged with demonstrates its applicability to the larger work of migration studies; by looking outside of the 'darlings' you build your analysis around, scholars, academic networks, and corpuses that may be firmly situated in particular geographic, epistemological, or scholarly positions, you can better understand the world of people on the move, and the people moving around you. Collective self-inquiry has the ability to mitigate and address these issues by placing value on the lived experience and expertise of the people you share affinities with.

Closing Interlude: From the feedback sessions

I feel very sensitive about the fact that I have also found the imperial eyes, imperial voice, imperial hands, imperial thoughts in my own academic practices.(May 2020, Nijmegen)

I won't walk out. I'm gonna ask for love. (May 2020, Den Bosch)

6. Conclusion

The process of collective writing and work is a time-consuming, complicated, and extremely rewarding endeavor. Bringing insights gathered from a migrant squat in Barcelona to the camps of Lesvos, and transiting these European ideas to the Oromo struggle in Ethiopia meant finding a shared language for these experiences, and admitting that there may be instances where no such common tongue exists. In each vignette, despite the reflexive work of their crafting and the collaboration that led up to the final product, there were spaces where we misspoke or ignored a crucial piece of the puzzle. In collaboration, these oversights became more visible.

While the university sets the terms and conditions on our contract, our work/lives, and even our subject populations, there are cracks in the foundation of this institution through which more transformative work can take place. Migration studies, as embedded in the larger institutionalized policing of movement, is a field in need of this type of intervention and critical questioning as found in pieces like Aparna and Kramsch (2018), Bejarano et al. (2019), and Del Vecchio et al. (2017). Through practices or techniques such as collective writing, the interview, or the focus group we would like to extend our desire to talk both among ourselves and to others, moving towards a more liberatory practice of academic research. Rephrased, perhaps, there is an element of replicability that we believe connects this project into many other studies in the field of migration and beyond. As Harney and Moten share: "Well, when we are apart we are not alone. We are apart but with others, elaborating on our partnership through others and coming together in different configurations" against the academy's "individuating tools" of "improvement, advancement, recognition" (Ngin, van Horn, & Westfall, 2020). This description is not intentionally vague, rather it means to show that looking for and building collective networks may be easier than you think. Likely, the foundations of these groups already exist in your office, at the coffee shop, your neighborhood, the classroom, in the writing group you are thinking about joining. Ask yourself: How do you want the world to look? How do you want your hometown, your neighborhood, your school to look? Who do you want to work with, and why? Where are they? What will you bring to the table once you help building it? What is going to be researched and who is making decisions about it? Who is the research work done with? What is going to be asked, and where will the data go? Answer these questions with your colleague, your best friend, your neighbor, and then try once more with the whole group. When you begin your research, ask these questions again.

We believe that asking yourself questions collectively, and engaging in collective self-inquiry, is a powerful tool to navigate towards the undercommons, undermining the structures of precarity inside academia, as well as academia as an institution inside society. However, this is not to say that this approach is without its limitations. Engaging in critique without a plan to action or remaining too insulated in first university accumulation to fully identify these shortcomings are some possible points of weakness. Furthermore, although we position ourselves outside the strict boundaries of academia, our collective self-inquiry, and our primary audience is still all situated within the university. Though Europe is where colonialism was born and learned to thrive, though the universities produced by these imperial states were some of the empire's earliest garrison forces, and despite the fact that they continue to benefit from research as an industry of exploitation, we refuse to let this 'first' university be the only one, or allow research to be part of an academic market that manages our time, money, and power relations with imperial ideologies. We refuse to be cogs in this colonial research machine, and believe that there may be others who want to be reassembled, with third university visions in mind. Let us move together towards a more liberatory and reconciliatory future.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Kolar and Joris for the opportunity, and to Cesar for the rich comments and conversation. We appreciate the feedback from the anonymous reviewers. To Melanie, thank you for your inexhaustible support from within the university. The research for this article was supported by the MOVES project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 812764.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Ahmed, S. (2000). *Strange encounters: Embodied others in post-coloniality*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Akkerman, M. (2016). Border wars: The arms dealers profiting from Europe's refugee tragedy. *Transnational Institute*. Retrieved from https://www.tni.org/en/publication/border-wars

Akkerman, M. (2018). Expanding the fortress: The policies, the profiteers, and the people shaped by EU's externalisation programme. *Transnational Institute*. Retrieved from https://www.tni.org/en/publication/

expanding-the-fortress
Andersson, R. (2014). *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine migration and the business of bordering Europe*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
Aparna, K., & Kramsch, O. T. (2018). Asylum university: Re-situating knowledge-exchange along cross-border positionalities. In G. Bhambra, K. Nisancioglu, & D. Gebrial (Eds.), *Decolonising the university: Context and practice* (pp. 93–107). London: Pluto Press.
Aparna, K., Kramsch, O., Mahamed, Z., & Deenen, I. (2017). Lost Europe(s). *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa, Rivista quadrimestrale*, *3*, 435–452.
Bejarano, C. A., Juárez, L. L., García, M. A. M., & Goldstein, D. M. (2019). *Decolonizing ethnography*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Butler, U. M. (2009). Notes on a dialogical anthropology. *Anthropology in Action*, *16(3)*, 20–31. https://doi.org/10.3167/aia.2009.160303
Byrd, J. (2011). *The transit of empire*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
Cabot, H. (2019). The business of anthropology and the European refugee regime. *American Ethnologist*, *46*, 261–275. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12791
Casas-Cortes, M., Cobarrubias, S., De Genova, N., Garelli, G., Grappi, G., Heller, C., . . . Tazzioli, M. (2015). New keywords: Migration and borders. *Cultural Studies*, *29*(1), 55–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2014.891630
Cranston, S., Schapendonk, J., & Spaan, E. (2018). New directions in exploring the migration industries: Introduction to special issue. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(4), 543–557. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1315504
Crawley, S. (2012). Autoethnography as feminist self-interview. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 143–160). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
Del Vecchio, D., Toomey, N., & Tuck, E. (2017). Placing photovoice: Participatory action research with undocumented migrant youth in the Hudson Valley. *Critical Questions in Education*, *8*(4), 358–376.
European Commission. (2015). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A European agenda on migration (Document 52015DC0240). *EurLex*. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52015DC0240
European Commission. (2016). Funding & tender opportunities. *Europa.eu*. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/bes-03-2015
European Commission. (2017). *Horizon 2020 work programme for research & innovation 2018–2020*. Brussels: European Commission, Research and Innovation. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/sites/horizon2020/files/migration_fact_sheet_2018-2020.pdf
Ewing, E. (2018). The quality of the light: Evidence, truths, and the odd practice of the poet–sociologist. In O. N. Perlow, S. L. Bethea, D. I. Wheeler, & B. M. Scott (Eds.), *Black women's liberatory pedagogies* (pp. 195–210). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Group FIC. (2005). Investigación crítica: Desafíos y posibilidades [Critical research: Challenges and possibilities]. *Athenea Digital. Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social*, *1*(8), 129–144. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/athenead/v1n8.223
Franck, A. K. (2018). The Lesvos refugee crisis as disaster capitalism. *Peace Review*, *30*(2), 199–205.
Gannon, S., Kligyte, G., McLean, J., Perrier, M., Swan, E., Vanni, I., & van Rijswijk, H. (2015). Uneven relationalities, collective biography, and sisterly affect in neoliberal universities. *Feminist Formations*, *27*(3), 189–216.
Garelli, G., & Tazzioli, M. (2013). Challenging the discipline of migration: Militant research in migration studies, an introduction. *Postcolonial Studies*, *16*(3), 245–249.
Gill, R. (2010). Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of neo-liberal academia. in R. Flood & R. Gill (Eds.), *Secrecy and silence in the research process: Feminist reflections* (pp. 228–244). Abingdon: Routledge.
Goldman, M. (2005). *Imperial nature*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. (2018). The coloniality of migration and the "refugee crisis": On the asylum–migration nexus, the transatlantic white European settler colonialism-migration and racial capitalism. *Refuge*, *34*(1), 16–28.
Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2013). *The undercommons*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.
hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. New York, NY: Routledge.
Human Rights Watch. (2017). Fuel on the fire. *Human Rights Watch*. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/20/fuel-fire/security-force-response-2016-irreecha-cultural-festival
King, T. L. (2015). Post-identitarian and post-intersectional anxiety in the neoliberal corporate university. *Feminist Formations*, *27*(3), 114–138.
Kumar, R. (2017). Securing through technology. EU actors, relations, practices (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Brussels School of International Studies, Brussels, and the University of Kent, UK.
Kumsa, M. K., Chambon, A., Yan, M. C., & Maiter, S. (2015). Catching the shimmers of the social: From the limits of reflexivity to methodological creativity. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(4), 419–436.
la paperson. (2017). *A third university is possible*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
Mann, S. (2008). *Study, power and the university*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.
Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2014). *Border as a method:*

The multiplication of labour. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Nash, J., & Owens, E. A. (2015). Institutional feelings: Practicing women's studies in the corporate university. *Feminist Formations*, *27*(3), vii–xi.

Ngin, Z., van Horn, S., & Westfall, A. (2020, May 1). When we are apart we are not alone: A conversation with Fred Moten and Stefano Harney. *The Indy*. Retrieved from from https://www.theindy.org/2017

Papadopoulos, D., & Tsianos, V. (2013). After citizenship: Autonomy of migration, organisational ontology and mobile commons. *Citizenship Studies*, *17*(2), 178–196. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2013.780736

Papadopoulos, D., Stephenson, N., & Tsianos, V. (2008). *Escape routes: Control and subversion in the 21st century*. London: Pluto Press.

Saucier, P. K., & Woods, T. P. (2014). Ex aqua: The Mediterranean basin, Africans on the move and the politics of policing. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, *61*(141), 55–75.

Sharpe, C. (2014). Black studies: In the wake. *The Black Scholar*, *44*(2), 59–69.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Zed Books.

Spillers, H. (1987). Mama's baby, papa's maybe: An American grammar book. *Diacritics*, *17*(2), 64–81.

Sukarieh, M., & Tannock, S. (2019). Subcontracting Academia: Alienation, exploitation and disillusionment in the UK overseas Syrian refugee research industry. Antipode, 51(2), 664–680. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12502

Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. ACME: An International Journal For Critical Geographies, 6(3), 374–385.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *1*(1), 1–40.

van Houtum, H., & van Naerssen, T. (2002). Bordering, ordering and othering. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, *93*(2), 125–136.

Walcott, R. (2019). The end of diversity. *Public Culture*, *3*(2), 393–408.

Whetung, M., & Wakefield, S. (2019). Colonial conventions: institutionalized research relationships and decolonizing research ethics. In L. T. Smith, E. Tuck, & K. W. Yang (Eds.), *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education: Mapping the long view* (1st ed., pp. 146–158). New York, NY: Routledge.

About the Authors

Madeline J. Bass was raised in a settler state, on the border between two colonial empires, descended from immigrants and stolen people. She has a degree in Sociology and Anthropology from Wells College in Aurora, New York, and an M.S. in Sociology from Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, USA. She lived in Western Oromia, Ethiopia, from 2014–2017. Her present work is with Oromo women across the diaspora, focusing on their struggles against structures of violence.

Daniel Córdoba was born and raised in Madrid and has, later on, lived and developed his professional and academic career in different countries. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Geography and History by UNED in Spain and a Master's degree in History, International Relations, and Cooperation by the University of Porto. He is currently researching the processes of collective action of migrant women working on the domestic and care sector in Spain.

Peter Teunissen obtained a B.S. in Anthropology and Development Sociology and a B.A. in Philosophy from the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. In 2017, he was a Research Assistant with the Nijmegen Centre for Border Research where he worked on the relation between vehicles, borders, and migration. In 2018, he graduated from Utrecht University's Gender and Ethnicity Research Master. Since then, he has been working on the intersections of migration industries, b/ordered mobilities, and the infrastructures of exclusion.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2020, Volume 8, Issue 4, Pages 157–168
DOI: 10.17645/si.v8i4.3354

Article

Mapping European Border Control: On Small Maps, Reflexive Inversion and Interference

Silvan Pollozek

Digital Media Lab, Munich Centre for Technology in Society, Technical University of Munich, 80333 Munich, Germany;
E-Mail: silvan.pollozek@tum.de

Submitted: 15 June 2020 | Accepted: 7 September 2020 | Published: 19 November 2020

Abstract
The so-called hotspots—identification and registration centres on the Aegean Islands in Greece and in Italy—are not only sites of remote detention, European intervention or differential inclusion, but also logistical set-ups, where data is generated and spread across state institutions. Such socio-technical assemblages are hard to research not only because of state actors' desire to keep things secret but also because of methodological issues. How does one disentangle their extensive, complex and rhizomatic nature? Which trajectories does one follow and which actors and voices does one assemble? Following recent work in the realm of STS, methods are understood as (b)ordering devices, which performatively enact an ordered world and produce accounts of the social, including some realities while excluding others. This article considers mapping a well-suited method for studying widespread socio-technical assemblages, but only if it is handled with caution. Based on an empirical inquiry into the Moria hotspot and following a praxeographic research approach, different types of small maps are developed that enfold complexity by being attentive to situatedness, symmetry, multi-sitedness and multiplicity. Furthermore, it emphasizes an on-going process of reflexive inversion of the mapping process that makes the crafted accounts contestable and its boundaries and blind spots visible. Finally, the article discusses how mappings can be used not only as research but also as a political device that contributes to the work of other collectives beyond the scientific production of truth.

Keywords
issue maps; methods as ordering device; Moria hotspot; praxeography; situational maps; social world maps; trajectory maps

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe" edited by Kolar Aparna (Radboud University, The Netherlands), Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, The Netherlands) and Cesar Merlín-Escorza (Radboud University, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction

The so-called hotspots—identification and registration centres in the Aegean Islands in Greece and Italy—are not only sites of detention (Dimitriadi, 2017), European intervention (Kuster & Tsianos, 2016) or sorting centres (Campesi, 2018), but also logistical set-ups where data is generated, inserted into different chains and spread across state institutions (Pollozek & Passoth, 2019). Such socio-technical assemblages of migration and border control are hard to research not only because of several strategies that attempt to keep things secret or hidden but also because of methodological issues. Considering the number of agencies and their representatives, the many different forms and databases and the many sites and phenomena that are also related to the 'hotspot approach,' the question arises concerning how to study such an extensive, complex and rhizomatic subject. Following recent work in the realm of STS, methods are understood as (b)ordering devices which performatively enact an ordered social world and produce accounts of the social, as well as its components and attributes (Law & Ruppert, 2013). As such, some (partial) realities, actors and problems are made present while

others are made absent. Which trajectories does one follow and which actors and voices does one assemble?

This article considers mapping a well-suited method for studying geographically widespread and temporally fluid socio-technical assemblages and for drawing multiple actors, issues and materialities together (Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012, p. 445), but only if it is handled with caution and situated into a reflexive ethnographic research approach. Instead of crafting big maps that turn complex phenomena into simple schemes, silence voices, and produce matters of regulation or surveillance, this article opts for creating many small maps that enfold complexity by being attentive to situatedness, symmetry, multi-sitedness, and multiplicity. In the following, the article develops a mapping approach that is able to disentangle the extensive, complex and rhizomatic nature of migration and border control assemblages while at the same time being reflexive about how mapping performatively orders the social, navigates through a complex field, orchestrates voices and opens up realities for interventions. With this genuine focus on methodology and methods, the article aims to contribute to the current discourse on migration infrastructures and digital migration at the intersection of STS and critical migration and border studies.

Starting with a critique on a large map of the hotspot approach, this article will outline a small map approach that uses Adele Clarke's cartographic approaches as a starting point but pushes them towards a praxeographic methodology that focuses even more strongly on socio-technical practices as well as on situated, processual and multiple becomings of human and non-human entities and orderings (Mol, 2002). Based on an ethnographic inquiry of the Moria hotspot on Lesvos between 2016 and 2018, this article will sketch out different mapping approaches—situational, social world, trajectory and issue mapping. In an on-going process of reflexive inversion, it will make the boundaries of the mapping processes visible, criticize their orderings and use the blind spots they produce for (re)directing the subsequent research process. In the end, the article will ask how mappings can be used not only as research but also as a political device that contributes to the work of other collectives beyond the scientific production of truth (Law, 2004).

2. Situating Mapping in Praxeographic Research

In July 2015, the EU Commission released an explanatory note to the hotspot approach, which had been introduced in the context of the EU Commission's European Agenda on Migration two months earlier. The explanatory note gives details about what a hotspot is, how coordination takes place on the ground, what kind of support could be provided and what "added value" the hotspot approach could have (EU Commission, 2015, p. 5). Additionally, it introduces "two roadmaps on the practical implications" sketching out "who is doing what" (EU Commission, 2015, p. 10) and one 'hotspot approach' flowchart (Figure 1). The flowchart especially has been picked up by media (e.g., Der Standard), political (e.g., House of Lords) and EU actors (e.g., European Court of Auditors) because it was the only document back then that produced a first picture of the architecture of a hotspot with its actors, procedures and components.

This map brings together several actors in boxes via unilateral arrows that lead from one beginning to several ends. Even a first grasp of the map makes obvious that the bordering of migrant subjects is accomplished by a heterogeneous set-up shaped by such disparate things as agencies (Europol, Frontex, EASO), databases and technical systems (Eurodac), policies and measures (Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2007, Art. 78[3]), practices (debriefing, registration/identification, refusal of fingerprinting, risk analysis), further procedures and locations (detention, relocation, return, transfer, etc.), responsibilities (member state [MS]) and switching points ("wish to apply for asylum—yes/no").

The ends of this map show various mechanisms of social sorting and both inclusion and exclusion ranging from "grant of international protection" to "relocation" to the "transfer to responsible MS" or "return." We can say that these different institutional tracks also differ due to the rights and entitlements migrants have concerning residency, housing, health, education, work and other social services. In this sense, the hotspot approach produces many different variations and graduations of migrants' status, which is characteristic of contemporary border regimes and termed differential inclusion (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013).

The map also makes us realize that bordering manifests not only in the camp but also "elsewhere," for instance in the Eurodac database or at the headquarters of Frontex and Europol. Recent work in the realm of science and technology studies has pointed to the distributed activities of listing, labelling and categorizing within institutional ecologies and to the technical mediations concerning remote surveillance and control through interconnected and meshed up databases (Dijstelbloem & Broeders, 2015).

More than anything, the map produces a normative account of how things should work in this very organizational setup. It enacts an idealization of one big procedure which appears as functioning and seamless without frictions. Each actor has its role, the collaboration between organizations is defined, databases, organizations and humans are intertwined, and all procedures are lawful. It favours a clean technocratic solution that leaves out messiness, suffering, human rights and other issues—complexity. With this map circulating among policy and security actors, a powerful version of the hotspot approach has been enacted.

Latour (2005, p. 187) terms such maps panoramas. Panoramas see everything and nothing "since they simply show an image painted (or projected) on the tiny wall

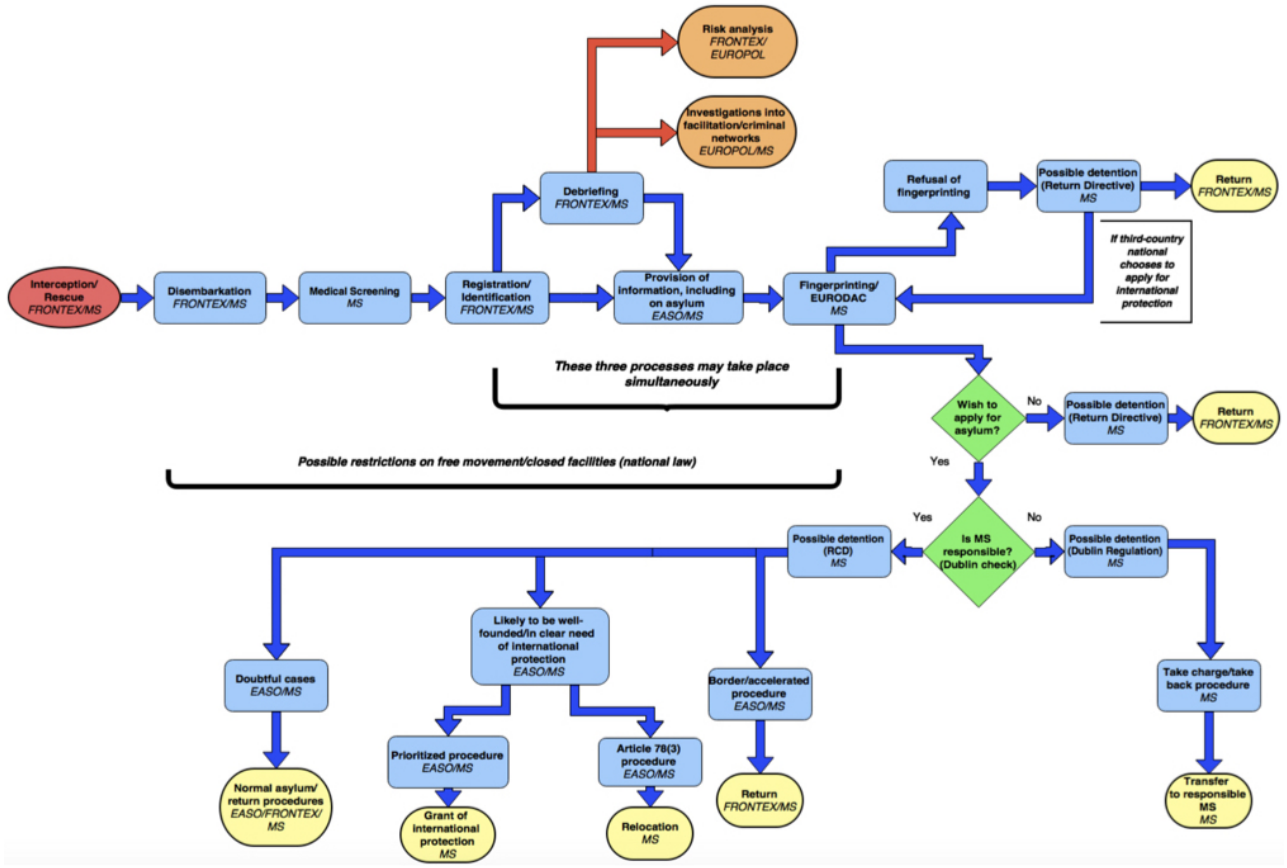

Figure 1. Hotspot approach. Source: EU Commission (2015, p. 12).

of a room fully closed to the outside." Panoramas do not make explicit how, by whom and for which purposes they were crafted. They either produce a distant position and simulate an "Archimedean point from which to represent the world" (Clifford, 1986, p. 22), or they enact a god-like view from no-where (Haraway, 1988). They turn a complex ecology into one simple scheme that represents the former "as a whole"—which is only possible by silencing many other voices and accounts (Geertz, 1973).

Panoramas also transform many phenomena, experiences and stories of people into numbers, populations, trends or other aggregates and translate them into matters of surveillance, control or regulation. In this sense, such maps refer to a practice strongly institutionalized by state actors and contribute to their stabilization and legitimization (Halder & Michel, 2019, p. 13). They are a crucial political technology for the creation of 'situational awareness,' the drawing of future scenarios, and the articulation of governance problems (Tazzioli, 2018), and facilitate the institutionalization of (trans)national spaces of border surveillance (Hess, 2010). In order to subvert and criticize such oversimplified big maps and to decompose the n-way nature of socio-technical assemblages (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 389), this article suggests an approach of counter-mapping that is based on 'thick analyses' and the creation of various 'small' maps, that aims to assemble multiple accounts of and voices in a situation of concern, and that is especially sensitive to silenced, invisibilized or othered voices and positions and to "what seems present but [remains] unarticulated" (Clarke, 2003, p. 561).

Especially for studying wide-spread and complex socio-technical assemblages of border control, this article suggests situating mapping into praxeographic research. As a variant of ethnography, praxeographic research focuses on situations but, by studying human and non-human entities in interaction and in a symmetrical way, it is more explicitly concerned with the socio-materiality and socio-technicality of a phenomenon. Meanings and identities are relevant regarding their effects on a particular practice as well as to the shaping of an entity or a social order (Sørensen & Schank, 2017, p. 412). Furthermore, praxeography not only traces multiple perspectives on a phenomenon but also studies the becoming of multiple phenomena realized by various enactments (Mol, 1999). An empirical inquiry thus makes multiple conditions of possibility visible, traces multiple configurations, agencies and options of an entity, and analyses how those multiple becomings are related to each other (Knecht, 2013, p. 95).

Mapping as a praxeographic methods device thus needs to be attentive not only to situatedness, complexity, and multi-sitedness, but also to heterogeneity, multiplicity, and translation. But how does one translate this into a research practice of and with mapping? Maybe Adele Clarke's cartographic approaches

are a promising starting point (Göde, 2015). Drawing on Strauss's social worlds and arena theory rooted in symbolic interactionist sociology and pragmatist philosophy, as well as on poststructuralist and postmodern approaches, Clarke has developed three types of mapping: (1) situational maps that empirically specify the elements of a situation—such as human and non-human actors, artefacts, objects, devices, doings, and sayings—as well as the relations among all the elements that "make each other up and together constitute the situation as a whole" (Clarke, 2019, p. 14); (2) social world maps that sketch out the social worlds coming together in a situation of interest, identify their properties, constraints, and resources, and make their intersections visible (Clarke, 2005, p. 110)—such maps lay out those collective actors and those lines of force that weigh on a situation, as well as those actors who are marginalized, silenced, or 'atomized,' without a collective; (3) positional maps that again carve out all the concerns articulated within a situation of concern, as well as those that have *not* been articulated but ignored, silenced or invisibilized.

Situational, social worlds and positional maps are very helpful approaches for opening up various situations of the trans-local and inter-organizational ordering of the hotspot. However, to be used as a praxeographic methods device that strictly focuses on practice, situatedness, heterogeneity, and multiplicity, they have to be modified in several ways: First, while Clarke seems to use situational maps for mapping a broader field of research, e.g., a broad institutional ecology of a hospital, a praxeography understands situations as confined events that (only) emerge when human and non-human entities actually meet and when meanings, knowledge, subjects, objects, and more are (re)enacted (Mathar, 2008, p. 31). In this sense, studying a wide-spread socio-technical assemblage praxeographically would mean conducting a small-range analysis and crafting maps on several situations in which entities meet.

Second, Mathar (2010, p. 157) criticizes how Clarke translates relationality into the mapping approaches. Clarke recommends putting all the entities on a piece of paper and then starting a relational analysis, in other words, to draw and qualify lines between the entities. This, however, risks producing immobile and essentialized entities, which stands against an actor-network theory-informed praxeography. Instead, research should shed light on the multiple becoming of an entity from situation to situation and be attentive to the processual shaping through time (Sørensen & Schank, 2017, p. 412). This does not only imply crafting many maps that make the different enactments of entities visible but also creating inversions of the very maps that question and subvert the mapping of entities and their relations to each other.

Third, Clarke's cartographic approaches remain inattentive to the circulation of entities. Studying a trans-local and inter-organizational socio-technical assemblage with various interconnected situations implies tracing the circulation of data, people and documents across various workplaces. Latour and others have criticized to think of the circulation of texts, figures, probes, goods, or other things from one site to another as a seamless and frictionless flow. Instead, when particular mediators have to move through time and space or when they bring their own agendas in, there are translation processes at work which alter the circulating entities in question. Callon (1984) has pointed to this with his subtle plays on the words 'traduction' and 'trahison' and argues that translation and betrayal are two sides of the same coin. In this sense, this article will develop trajectory maps that make visible the circulation of entities as well as reflect upon the transformations, tensions and frictions they go through.

Fourth, in contrast to Clarke's approaches that think of mapping as a mere research device, this article takes the political implications of mapping more strongly into account. In researching *on* and writing *about* the world, researchers interfere *with* the world they study (Law & Singleton, 2013, p. 488). Researchers in the realm of STS have experimented with different formats of interference that seek to bring alternative issues and solutions into the field of research which have not been taken into account before (Niewöhner, 2016). Here, intervention is not understood as a normative operation in the sense that the researcher prioritizes and selects some possibilities while silencing or ignoring others (Sørensen & Schank, 2017). Instead, by working out multiple enactments of subjects, objects and phenomena and the relations among them, an intervention would aim to complexify the normativity and power relations and point to alternative configurations. Similarly, and by drawing on Deleuze (1986), Pickles (2004) thinks mapping as a practice of enacting new possibilities and other realities that follows a logic of 'and, and, and.' Following such work, this article stresses to reflect upon the politics of mapping and to think about how mapping can be related to other social worlds and doings, forge new alliances, and create new collectives (Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012).

With these modifications in mind, mapping may become a suitable praxeographic methods device that helps to navigate through difficult terrain, to order a complex landscape of a socio-technical assemblage, and to trace the trajectories from one situation to another. At the same time, it represents the field's messiness, contradictions and heterogeneities, and urges us to reflect upon the research process as well as its politics. In the following, the article will return to the Moria hotspot and sketch out several mapping approaches that, together, seek to disentangle the socio-technical assemblage of the Moria hotspot.

3. Mapping Bureaucratic Practices, Their Interrelations and Alterations: Situational Maps

Situational maps aim to empirically specify the elements of a situation—such as human and non-human actors,

artefacts, objects, devices, doings and sayings—as well as the relationalities among them (Clarke, 2019, p. 14). One of the great strengths of situational maps is that they direct the researcher to specific, located and situated accounts without referring to a context or a structure that would frame or explain situations. The researcher needs to find out which boundaries, contexts and conditions of a situation are created within the situation itself.

In the first year of my empirical inquiry, it was difficult to map the practices, and their actor-networks, of the Moria hotspot, because I was not allowed to access the camp. In the three weeks of my stay in Lesvos in November 2016, I managed to conduct fifteen interviews with Frontex officers, interpreters, personnel from UNHCR, Médicins du Monde (MdM), and the Hellenic Registration and Identification Service (RIS), as well with the commander of the camp. As I was not able to act as an ethnographer myself, I attempted to make my interlocutors the ethnographers of their own work. The creation of situational maps supported this process. I decided not only to craft maps by myself as part of the analysis of the interview afterwards, but also to use it as an interaction device: I created maps on large sheets of paper together with my interlocutors during the interview. While asking my interlocutors many questions—about their daily work, which materials and devices they use, how they use it, which data they gather and process, with whom they interact and in which way, which problems and challenges they face, or which concerns they have—I tried to translate what they were saying onto a map. Such maps focused on what kind of practices the interlocutor conducted, where the doings took place, which human and nonhuman actors were involved, and which actions followed on which actions.

Often, the interlocutors were astonished about the complex working arrangements taking shape on the piece of paper, which turned the boring little doings into an interesting subject of inquiry, as well as into a matter of expertise. The situational maps also reminded both the researcher and the interlocutor to stay focused on the situated practices and not to get lost in general evaluations about the hotspots. The white spots and isolated entities on the paper also directed the course of the interview. It also happened that the interlocutors showed some photos and working devices in order to produce a better picture of how things work. After the interviews, I crafted new maps based on an in-depth analysis of the interviews, on additional working materials, and on the preliminary field maps. In an iterative process, this mapping exercise placed the doings and interactions of my interlocutors at Moria hotspot on paper, as well as all the other human and non-human entities they were working with.

Step by step, a number of situations can be carved out that are constitutive for the socio-technical assemblage of Moria hotspot (Figure 2): the practice of screening with screeners, interpreters and document specialists (ALDOs), identification manuals and Google Maps (III),

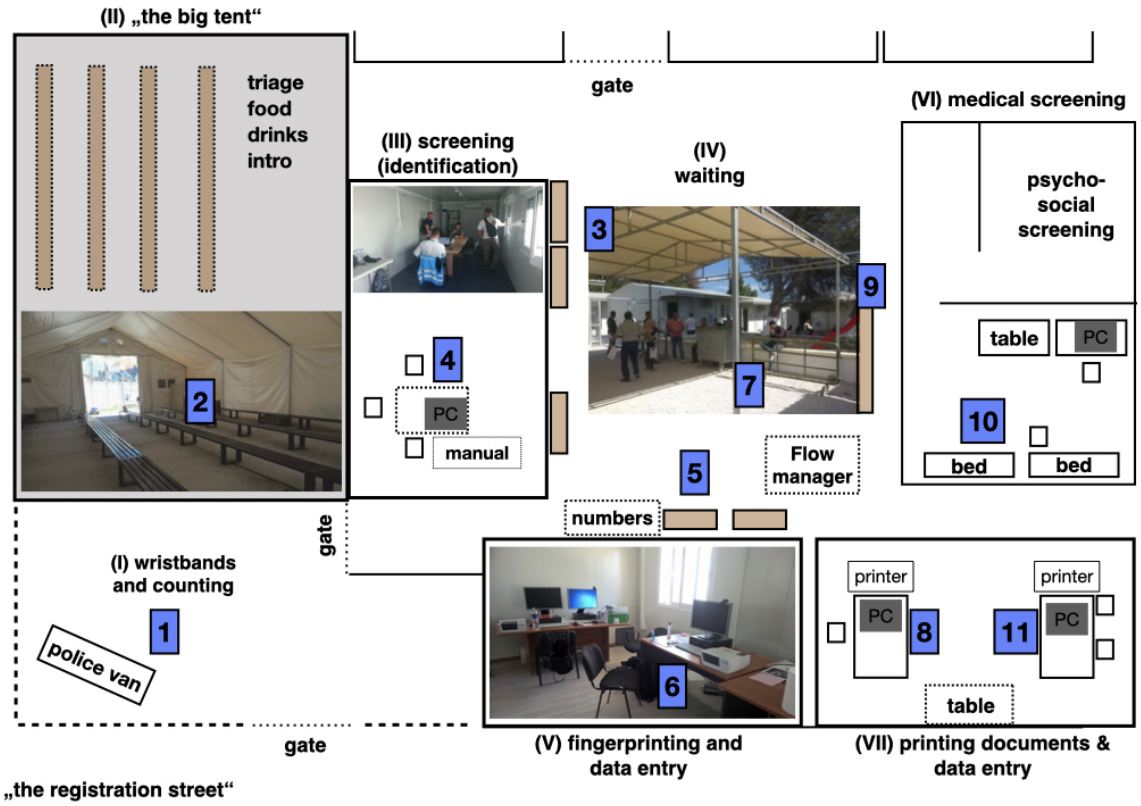

Figure 2. Situational map of the Registration and Identification Centre Moria.

the practice of fingerprinting with fingerprinters, fingerprinting machines, police databases, Eurodac, and disinfectants (V), or the practice of issuing documents with computers, printing machines, stamps and clerks from Hellenic administrations (VII) (see, for an in-depth analysis, Pollozek & Passoth, 2019). The situational maps also made visible the spatial organization of the Moria hotspot. The practices of screening, fingerprinting or issuing documents are contained through containers and separated from each other. They host highly stabilized and immobile entities, highly routinised practices, and a particular area of expertise. As we will see, each container accommodates a social world on its own. In contrast to those contained and immobile entities and practices, so-called "flow managers," the arrival and all kinds of documents move from one container to another.

While the interlocutors were able to provide differentiated and detailed descriptions about their working routines in their own container, they changed to a much more general and abstract register when I asked about the practices in the other containers. Then, regularly, the account of the "registration street" came into play (Pollozek & Passoth, 2019). It basically describes how the so-called "irregular migrant" turns into a legalized person by going through different steps and stations. It is a well-structured and systematized story about a well-ordered procedure, and it reminded me of a text from a standard-procedure protocol. In the beginning, I was disappointed by such generalized descriptions until I noticed that it is an important device for the interlocutors to situate themselves within the bigger and spatially dispersed assemblage of the hotspot. While the "registration street" interrelates the spatialised and contained practices, it separates them from each other at the same time. It provides the basic roles of each actor in "the whole process" and articulates a teleological process and a technocratic procedure that provides so-called "irregular migrants" with legal status.

With situational mapping, the assemblage of the Moria hotspot has been decomposed into several different practices and actor-networks that are organizationally and spatially modularized, contained, and separated from each other. However, situational maps tend to insinuate a built, stabile and atemporal order. As praxeographic research takes the on-going enactment of reality into account (Law, 2004, p. 56), the researcher has to be attentive to the processuality of becoming and to the events that produce alterations and variations (Mol, 2002, p. 14). In this regard, I asked the interlocutors about changes, variations and reconfigurations and crafted several situational maps throughout my later fieldwork at the Hellenic Coast Guard, the international coordination centre (ICC) and the EU regional task force coordination centre (EURTF) in Piraeus in January and May 2017, at the Frontex headquarters in Warsaw in May 2017, at the local coordination centre (LCC), the Hellenic coast guard and Hellenic police departments, as well as at the Moria hotspot on Lesvos in April 2018. The material I gathered included another thirty interviews, several working documents and forms, and notes about several visits at the Moria hotspot facility.

Such maps crafted over time point to the on-going reconstructions and changes at the Moria hotspot. The workplaces in the containers both increased and decreased over the years, the staff was exchanged every month, agencies, such as MdM, withdraw, and the command went from the Hellenic Police to the RIS. There were also on-going ad-hoc reconstructions of the camp. The "big tent" of the camp, for example, was regularly used as a temporary sleeping facility, when too many people arrived on Lesvos' shores at the same time (Figure 2). It also happened that the whole centre was overcrowded and the gate between the tent and the "registration street" was unlocked, or that the yard turned into a playground, sleeping area or work ground. Sometimes, there was a "flow manager" at the Moria hotspot, other times, the process was organized by assigning numbers, or the officers would stand in front of the containers and call out names, and sometimes none of that happened. It also happened that the working stations were set up in front of the containers.

One could describe such observations as constant overflows that exceed the socio-material framing of the situations of screening, fingerprinting or document issuing (Callon, 1998). But, as other work also suggests, this may also be seen as a mode of governance at the camp, which Papada, Papoutsi, Painter, and Vradis (2019) termed "pop-up governance," and which can be characterized by tinkering, workarounds and short-terms solutions including improvised bureaucratic practices that are full of errors, inconsistencies and inaccuracies (Rozakou, 2017, p. 38). Although this is beyond the scope of this article, it would be worth elaborating on such ad-hoc and all too often irregular bureaucratic practices as a mode of statecraft carried out on the shoulders of migrants who face unbearable conditions with long waiting times and inadequate health, food, housing and other services.

4. Studying Collectives, the Tensions between Them, and the Atomized Actors They Produce: Social World Maps

While crafting situational maps, I was confronted with many different agencies and administrations. In contrast to accounts of a well-oiled machinery or a smooth multi-actor collaboration found in policy documents, those collective actors, along with their representatives, agendas, resources, and funding and reporting schemes produced frictions and tensions in various ways.

Clarke aims to analyse the impact of collective actors on situations through social world maps and to carefully study their mutual interferences and entanglements. As outlined above, the registration and identification centre assembles several containers accommodating particular actor-networks and practices. Each container pro-

duces organizational boundaries and hosts experts with particular knowledge who face particular problems and use particular devices. While screening and fingerprinting is conducted by Frontex and the medical screening is done by MdM, issuing documents is carried out by Hellenic administrations, namely the RIS and the Hellenic Police. Each of the practices is supported and carried out by a particular collective actor that again has the resources to assemble a whole collective of human and non-human actors, such as personnel, team leaders, coordinators, shift-plans, working equipment, computers, databases, devices, formulas, etc. and to push forward particular agendas (Figure 3).

Such different, and quite autonomous, social worlds distributed among different containers clashed with the official, hierarchical scheme of the Moria hotspot with the Hellenic authorities in charge and prevented its implementation. For Frontex, for instance, identifying and registering all people systematically and monitoring the data upload onto the Eurodac database is of utmost importance. It is a crucial part of genuine *European* migration management based on the Schengen agreement. This requires a thorough identification, which takes time and clashed at times with the agenda of the Hellenic police. The latter wanted to speed up the identification and registration procedures to clear the overcrowded centre. In the end, Frontex officers refused to accelerate the practice of identification and registration. MdM again felt quite uncomfortable with its role as a state actor and issuing health and vulnerability records. It tried to subvert its position and staged itself as a critical actor by publishing weekly reports on the situation in the Moria hotspot. Tensions between the agencies were additionally fuelled by unequal working conditions (Rozakou, 2017). Frontex officers, for example, received both a higher salary than local Hellenic police officers and better compensation for overtime hours.

Social world maps also make explicit what Clarke (2005, p. 46) calls "atomized" and "implicated actors"—those who are not part of a social world, who have no collective behind them, no resources they can rely on, and no allies in whose name they can speak. Indeed, the arrivals running through the "registration street" are put in highly asymmetrical situations, in which they have only little to mobilize. However, from an angle of praxeography, such an analysis is too one-dimensional. This is because such a mapping shows neither in what ways atomized actors are plugged into social worlds differently nor how those atomized actors are enacted and made productive in multiple ways. In the case of the "registration street," a praxeographic analysis reveals that it is not a single actor but a 'human multiple' with several bodies, (data) identities, and subjectivities that are enacted. In the end, a legalized, migrant subject is crafted, but as a result of a cumulative process of enactments.

In the screening procedure, the arrival has to reveal biographical information about herself and convince the officers that such information is credible and that she

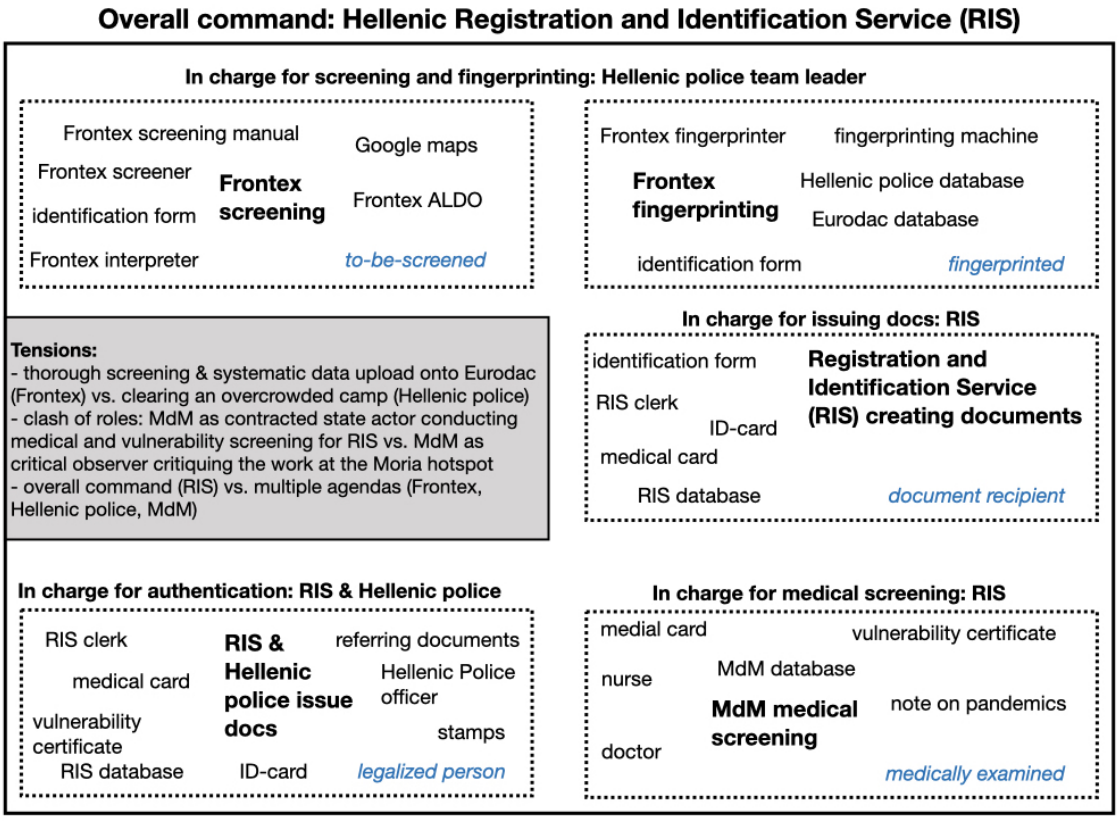

Figure 3. Social world map of the Registration and Identification Centre Moria.

acts truthfully. Her stories about herself are checked in terms of consistency, locations are checked via Google Maps, her dialect is assessed by the interpreters and her body is approached as a telling entity that may reveal lies. In the end, an identity is defined by the screeners and stabilized in the "identification form." In the fingerprinting container, the hands and fingers serve as an identification device that makes it possible to create a legible identity without the need for an intelligible subject (Kuster & Tsianos, 2012). Together with the classifications from the identification form, two more identities are created: one in the Hellenic police and another in the Eurodac database. In the medical screening, nurses and doctors approach the arrival in terms of mental and physical illness. Certificates, as well as the arrival's body, serve as a guarantor for the arrival's accounts. In the end, the doctors make a diagnosis and create two more identities, one about the health status of the arrival and another about whether she is vulnerable or not. Finally, RIS and Hellenic police produce a legal and stamped ID card that turns the arrival into a legalized entity with particular rights (social services, permit to stay on the island for a limited time) as well as many limitations.

Those multiple enactments of data identities will have their own social life in the different realms of EU and Hellenic administration (Pollozek & Passoth, 2019). Yet, the multiple enactments are also put together in a cumulative and sequenced process that creates a legal entity—a legalized migrant subject—with particular characteristics in the end. As far as I have witnessed, neither the production of multiple identities nor what they are for and which consequences they could have to the person in question is explained properly at the site. There is no spokesperson for the arrival in the very procedures that could guide and advise her. And there is no office in the centre for objections, demands or requests. In other words, the politics of identification and registration is based on multiple enactments and their concealment.

5. Tracing the Circulation of Forms and the Failures of Translation: Trajectory Maps

With the situational maps and the social world maps, I was able to work out the particularities of several practices and their socio-material arrangements being at work at the Moria RIC, as well as how they are shaped by collective actors and collectives. Yet, how collaboration across the different situations and containers is realized has remained underexposed thus far. As Latour (2005) and others from the realm of actor-network theory have pointed out, trajectories cannot be taken for granted. Instead, it has to be studied how actors are capable of pointing to other localities, actors and points of time in the past and the future in their present work and which actors are successfully able to do so.

When I focused on trajectories and tried to map them, the forms and documents especially attracted my attention (Figure 4). I decided to conduct further interviews and asked which documents are used, what classifications are defined, how they are filled out, and how they

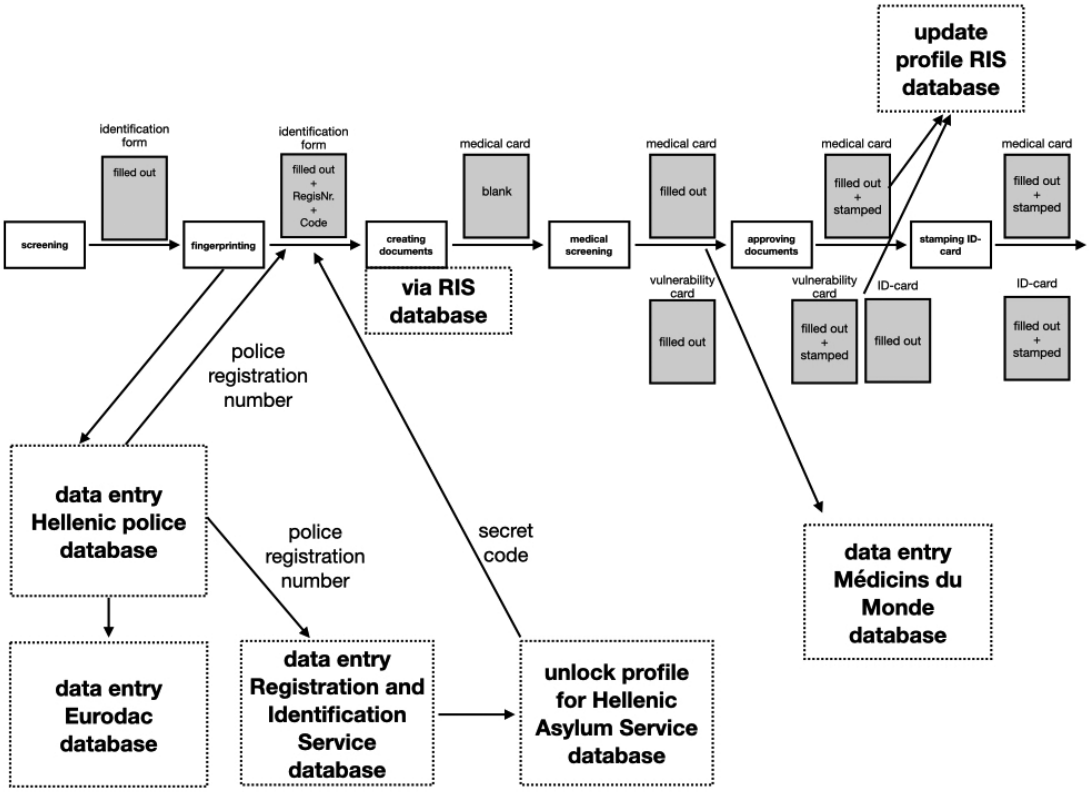

Figure 4. Trajectory map of the Registration and Identification Centre Moria.

are used for data entries. The forms circulate between the different teams and distribute data to several organizations and their databases. The forms also coordinate the actions between Frontex, Hellenic police, RIS and MdM by transforming complex processes of collaboration into a simplified chain (Schüttpelz, 2013). Like in a relay race, the forms go from one hand to the next and initiate a new routinised practice with each delivery: When the filled-out identification form from the screening is given to the fingerprinters, the latter can create a profile within the Hellenic Police database and start fingerprinting; when the Hellenic Police database identification number and a secret symbol has been added on the identification form, the RIS clerk can create another database profile for her agency. Through the relay with forms, several data identities and a legalized ID-entity are crafted in a cumulative process.

Although the trajectory map shows how forms are crucial for the distribution of data and the simplification and coordination of collaboration among several agencies, it does not reveal the complexities of paperwork within administrations. As Garfinkel points out, reports within an institutional ecology are not written for outsiders but for entitled actors who are capable of reading their indexical and cursory texture and relating those to particular working contexts (Garfinkel, 1969, p. 201). This is why the investigator has to focus on various user-contexts and carve out the multiple ways clerks work with reports. Taking this into account, I tried to work out what the forms do in each work setting. For instance, as a purification device (Latour, 1993), the identification form leaves out all the messiness as well as all the objections from the arrivals and creates a case out of predefined classifications that can be easily processed in a later step. The identification form, the restriction of the liberty card, and the medical card additionally authenticated the (new) identity of an arrival and address responsibility to a state agency after they have been signed and stamped. With this, they ascribe a stigma to its carrier (van der Ploeg, 1999). The forms are also used as a device of social sorting (Bowker & Star, 1999). At the end of the identification and registration process, the RIS creates referring documents that are sent to other Hellenic agencies via email. While identities with the item "Willingness of applying for Asylum: No" are sorted into the category "Non-Asylum Applicant" and forwarded to Hellenic police, identities with the item "Willingness of applying for Asylum: Yes" are sent to the Hellenic Asylum Service or those classified as vulnerable go to E.K.K.A. and after being archived by RIS, the forms become a warrantor of an identity and that an administrative procedure has taken place. This backup also entails the basic personal information of an arrival for potential future needs.

Observing the trajectory map that guided my inquiry also made me uncomfortable in another way. It somehow assumes that translation happens successfully and smoothly and leaves frictions and failure aside. Work in the realm of ANT has repeatedly pointed out that translation and betrayal are two sides of the same coin (Callon, 1984). With a focus on betrayal and failure, I noticed that the interplay of different forms and databases made the job of the fingerprinter a severe test. The database system of Hellenic Police is basically software used in many countries and also usually available in English. The adaption to the administration of Hellenic police included, among other things, that it has been translated into Greek and only Greek. However, it is not Hellenic police officers but Frontex officers who are entering the data into that database—and most of them are neither able to speak Greek nor to read Greek letters. The identification form they receive from the Frontex screeners again is usually filled out in English. In this way, Frontex fingerprinters are turned into bad translators who produce potentially error-prone data and other overflows.

To make translation more stable, Hellenic police has printed out additional sheets with the translations of the most relevant categories and items from the identification form as well as from the Hellenic database. The Frontex fingerprinters in turn tried to learn how to correctly enter data by memorizing the running order of clicking through the system. However, the Hellenic police database is not a silent and passive entity. If there is a wrong click, for instance, it returns an error message. It also cross-references the data entries with all the others saved in the database and creates a list with similar names and gives some additional alerts. This overstrained the Frontex officers, which is why they went to the Hellenic police officers' container and asked for help. As most of the times the database produces false alerts, both Frontex and Hellenic officers became reluctant to check on them and started to ignore them. This mode of ignorance, however, may produce all kinds of data-errors that could also have unforeseen consequences for the people those datasets are about.

6. Articulating Issues, Keeping Them Contestable and Bringing Them to Other Arenas: Issue Maps

In the previous sections, this article developed various maps of the socio-technical assemblage of the Moria hotspot that reject the reification of "big pictures" created by EU and EU state agencies loaded with visions of technocratic border management, a good collaboration between state agencies and lawful and a seamless bureaucratic procedure. The article suggested studying the interactions between human and non-human entities with situational maps, to work out the tensions of collaboration among different collectives as well as the enactment of a 'human multiple' by social world maps, and to trace the circulation of forms and data by trajectory maps. In this last section of the article, I will collect and generalize various issues and create what I call an issue map (Figure 5).

Clarke uses positional maps to disentangle contested or debated issues and to analyse the positions of the spokespersons taken in a particular public discourse.

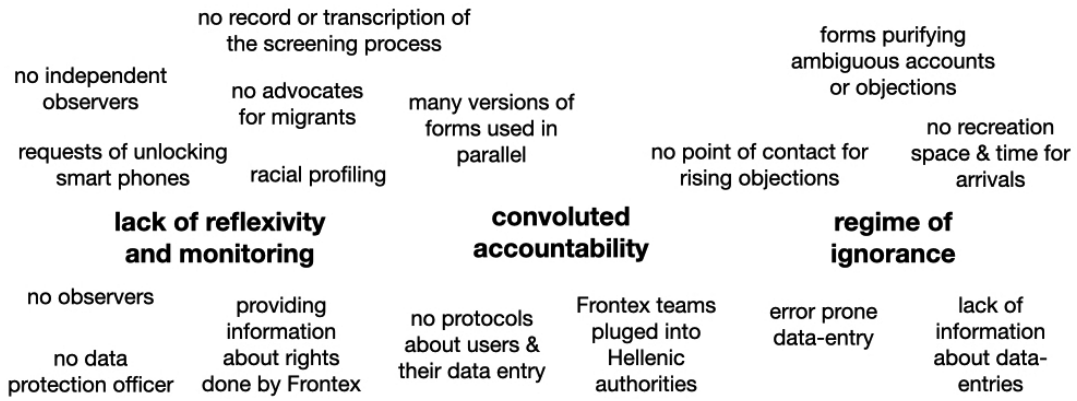

Figure 5. Issue map of the Registration and Identification Centre Moria.

Within institutional ecologies of border control, which is better characterised by secrecy, barriers and caution than by public debates and controversies, a discourse analysis is difficult to conduct. But Clarke also stresses to be sensitive to the issues which are somehow there but remain absent, as well as to look out for contradicting accounts and positions actors that are articulating (Clarke, 2005, p. 129). This might be a more suitable starting point for a critical approach of issue mapping that focuses on power relations and conditions of governing and produces silenced, invisibilized and othered voices and positions. In the following, I will articulate different issues by interrelating and generalizing topics that came up throughout the inquiry and the different mapping processes.

First, several orderings work hand in hand and enact a regime of ignorance: The socio-material arrangement does not provide any workplace for complaints and appeals; forms in use do not document how data has been gathered in the very processes of interrogation and screening but merely state a purified version about the case; advocates speaking in favour of migrants are absent; several data-entries are conducted without letting migrants know; or wrong data entries with unforeseen consequences are ignored. Furthermore, different orderings co-produce what I call convoluted accountability. Data entries into the Hellenic police database are conducted by Frontex personnel without leaving a trace; the practice of identification and registration is carried out by Frontex personnel although the Hellenic state authorities take responsibility; and different versions of formulas created by different staff circulate the Moria hotspot and create a mess. Moreover, there is a severe lack of reflexivity through the absence of monitoring devices or third parties. No independent party checks on human rights and legal issues, if the actions of the officers comply with legal requirements, or on data quality, protection, and privacy issues when data is gathered and exchanged between several databases.

Although I think that the generalization of those issues is valid, it makes me feel unease. While the former mapping strategies assembled accounts quite closely to my interlocutors, this move makes me critique them from a separated academic 'space of expertise.' Furthermore, such big labels risk being cut from the grounded accounts. So how to articulate critique that remains situated, that keep its relation to the accounts of the interlocutors alive, and that remains contestable not only to other colleagues from academia but also to other arenas?

Praxeographic work has pointed out that research is not only about tracing but also about making new associations by starting co-laborative forms of knowledge production. This, however, requires "mutual willingness and interest of the various parties to be inspired…by each other's practices" (Zuiderent-Jerak, 2010, p. 700)—something which appears to be almost impossible in an institutional ecology of migration and border control and especially in the Moria hotspot. Access is very limited and the situations that the researcher observes are highly asymmetrical. Restrictions of information are everywhere, confidentiality agreements have to be signed, and the employees are overworked to their limit and frightened by the lack of information that fuels the already scandalized and scandalous discourse about Moria. Regardless of the existence of a co-laborative project, the researcher would face the problem of having quite limited room for manoeuvre and running into the danger of getting instrumentalised and being accused of becoming a 'system designer.'

An alternative could be to reach out to other social worlds and arenas instead. Issues concerning the exchange and gathering of data, for instance, could be shared with data monitoring and data protection actors from civic society (e.g., algowatch), from state administrations (e.g., data protection officers in Germany) or the EU (e.g., the European Data Protection Supervisor). Bringing issues to other arenas would not only make them contestable but also rearticulate them due to different practices. The issues worked out by the researcher may be interesting to her and a particular research community but perhaps not so much for collectives being concerned with, and working on legal human rights, policy, data protection or other issues. In this sense,

critiquing could be an on-going and collaborative process of bringing new and more values than truth to the table and (re)position the researcher's work in new actor-networks.

Issues may also be re-appropriated regarding new agendas, e.g., to a political initiative on data protection rights. In this way, such forms of collaboration would not only invert the issue map, the critique of the researcher and her positioning, but also convert them into something else. Such work on producing new hybrid and contestable forums have their own complexities, struggles and pitfalls and raise issues of participation, positioning and negotiation that are beyond of this article (Farías, 2016). Still, it would be a way to "articulate possibilities of other worlds" (Law & Singleton, 2013, p. 500)—even in such rigid institutional ecologies as European migration and border control.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this article was presented at the panel "Following What, When and Where to? Reflecting on Mobile Methods in Migration Research." The panel was part of the conference "A Mobilities Lens to the Human Mobility–Environmental Change Nexus" at Wageningen University in 2019. The author is grateful to the participants, as well as to the guest editors Kolar Aparna and Joris Schapendonk, to the anonymous reviewers and to the digital media lab at MCTS for their very helpful comments. Finally, the author thanks all the informants who supported the fieldwork.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (1999). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Callon, M. (1984). Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay. *The Sociological Review*, *32*(1), 196–233.

Callon, M. (1998). An essay on framing and overflowing: Economic externalities revisited by sociology. *The Sociological Review*, *46*(Suppl. 1), 244–269.

Campesi, G. (2018). Seeking asylum in times of crisis: Reception, confinement, and detention at Europe's Southern border. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, *37*(1), 44–70.

Clarke, A. E. (2003). Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn. *Symbolic Interaction*, *26*(4), 553–576.

Clarke, A. E. (2005). *Situational analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clarke, A. E. (2019). Situating grounded theory and situational analysis in interpretive qualitative inquiry. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of current developments in grounded theory* (pp. 3–48). London: SAGE Publications.

Clifford, J. (Ed.). (1986). *Writing culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2012/C 326/01 (2007).

Dalton, C., & Mason-Deese, L. (2012). Counter (mapping) actions: Mapping as militant research. *ACME*, *11*(3), 439–466.

Deleuze, G. (1986). *Foucault*. Paris: Editions du Minuit.

Dijstelbloem, H., & Broeders, D. (2015). Border surveillance, mobility management and the shaping of non-publics in Europe. *European Journal of Social Theory*, *18*(1), 21–38.

Dimitriadi, A. (2017). Governing irregular migration at the margins of Europe. The case of hotspots on the Greek islands. *Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitative*, *1*, 75–96.

EU Commission. (2015). *Explanatory note on the 'hotspot' approach.* Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved from https://www.statewatch.org/news/2015/jul/eu-com-hotsposts.pdf

Farías, I. (2016). Devising hybrid forums: Technical democracy in a dangerous world. *City*, *20*(4), 549–562.

Garfinkel, H. (1969). "Good" organizational reasons for "bad" clinic records. In H. Garfinkel (Ed.), *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (pp. 186–207). Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Göde, B. (2015). Praktiken kartografieren. Was bringt Clarkes Situational Analysis für Praxeografien? [Mapping practices. How does Clarke's situational analysis contribute to praxeografies?]. In F. Schäfer, A. Daniel, & F. Hillebrandt (Eds.), *Methoden einer Soziologie der Praxis* [Methods of a sociology of practice] (pp. 197–215). Bielefeld: transcript.

Halder, S., & Michel, B. (2019). Editorial—This is not an atlas. In kollektiv orangotango+ (Eds.), *This is not an atlas. A global collection of counter-cartographies* (pp. 12–25). Bielefeld: transcript.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), 575–599.

Hess, S. (2010). 'We are facilitating states!' An ethnographic analysis of the ICMPD. In M. Geiger & A. Pécoud (Eds.), *The politics of international migration management* (pp. 96–118). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Knecht, M. (2013). *Nach writing-culture, mit Actor-Network: Ethnografie/Praxeografie in der Wissenschafts-, Medizin-und Technikanthropologie* [After *writing-culture*, with *actor-network*: Ethnography/praxeography in the anthropology of science, medicine and technology]. In S. Hess, M. Schwertl, &

J. Moser (Eds.), *Europäisch-ethnologisches Forschen. Neue Methoden und Konzepte* (pp. 79–106). Berlin: Reimer.

Kuster, B., & Tsianos, V. (2012). *Thematic report "Border crossings" (WP4)*. *Mig@Net.* Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/3372539/Thematic_Report_Border_Crossings_WP_4_MIG_at_NET_Vassilis_Tsianos_Brigitta_Kuster

Kuster, B., & Tsianos, V. (2016). „Aus den Augen, aus dem Sinn"—Flüchtlinge und Migranten an den Rändern Europas. Hotspot Lesbos ["Long absent, soon forgotten"—Refugees and migrants at the margins of Europe. Hotspot Lesvos]. *Heinrich-Böll Stiftung*. Retrieved from https://www.boell.de/de/2016/08/03/hotspot-lesbos

Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern* (C. Porter, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Law, J. (2004). *After method*. London: Routledge.

Law, J., & Ruppert, E. (2013). The social life of methods: Devices. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, *6*(3), 229–240.

Law, J., & Singleton, V. (2013). ANT and politics: Working in and on the world. *Qualitative Sociology*, *36*(4), 485–502.

Mathar, T. (2008). Review essay: Making a mess with situational analysis? *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *9*(2). http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-9.2.432

Mathar, T. (2010). *Der Digitale Patient. Zu den Konsequenzen eines technowissenschaftlichen Gesundheitssystems* [The digital patient. On the consequences of a technoscientific health system]. Bielefeld: transcript.

Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013). *Border as method, or, the multiplication of labor*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mol, A. (1999). Ontological politics. A word and some questions. *The Sociological Review*, *47*(Suppl. 1), 74–89.

Mol, A. (2002). *The body multiple*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Niewöhner, J. (2016). Co-laborative anthropology. Crafting reflexivities experimentally. In J. Jouhki & T. Steel. (Eds.), *Etnologinen tulkinta ja analyysi. Kohti avoimempaa tutkimusprosessia* [Ethnological interpretation and analysis: Towards a transparent research process] (pp. 81–125). Helsinki: Ethnos.

Papada, E., Papoutsi, A., Painter, J., & Vradis, A. (2019). Pop-up governance: Transforming the management of migrant populations through humanitarian and security practices in Lesbos, Greece, 2015–2017. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775819891167

Pickles, J. (2004). *A history of spaces: Cartographic reason, mapping, and the geo-coded world*. London: Routledge.

Pollozek, S., & Passoth, J.-H. (2019). Infrastructuring European migration and border control: The logistics of registration and identification at Moria hotspot. *Environment and Planning D: Society and* Space, *37*(4), 606–624.

Rozakou, K. (2017). Nonrecording the "European refugee crisis" in Greece: Navigating through irregular bureaucracy. *Focaal—Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, *77*, 36–49.

Schüttpelz, E. (2013). Elemente einer Akteur-Medien-Theorie [Elements of an actor-media-theory]. In T. Thielmann & E. Schüttpelz (Eds.), *Akteur-Medien-Theorie* [Actor-] (pp. 9–70). Bielefeld: transcript.

Sørensen, E., & Schank, J. (2017). Einführung [Introduction]. In S. Bauer, T. Heinemann, & T. Lemke (Eds.), *Science and technology studies. Klassische Positionen und aktuelle Perspektiven* [Science and technology studies. Classical approaches and contemporary perspectives] (pp. 407–429). Berlin: Suhrkamp.

Star, S. L., & Griesemer, J. R. (1989). Institutional ecology, 'translation' and boundary objects: Amateurs and professionals in Berkeley's museum of vertebrate zoology, 1907–39. *Social Studies of Science*, *19*(3), 387–420.

Tazzioli, M. (2018). Spy, track and archive: The temporality of visibility in Eurosur and Jora. *Security Dialogue*, *49*(4), 272–288.

van der Ploeg, I. (1999). The illegal body: 'Eurodac' and the politics of biometric identification. *Ethics and Information Technology*, *1*(4), 295–302.

Zuiderent-Jerak, T. (2010). Embodied interventions—Interventions on bodies: Experiments in practices of science and technology studies and hemophilia care. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, *35*(5), 677–710.

About the Author

Silvan Pollozek is a member of the Digital Media Lab at the Munich Centre for Technology in Society (MCTS), Technical University of Munich. His research interests include digital infrastructures of Europe, logistics of contemporary migration and border management, and STS approaches to infrastructures, governance and mobility.

COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2020, Volume 8, Issue 4, Pages 169–177
DOI: 10.17645/si.v8i4.3314

Article

EU Border Officials and Critical Complicity: The Politics of Location and Ethnographic Knowledge as Additions

Marlene Paulin Kristensen

Independent Researcher, Denmark; E-Mail: jqm239@ku.dk

Submitted: 1 June 2020 | Accepted: 7 September 2020 | Published: 19 November 2020

Abstract
Based on research conducted among EU border enforcement officials, this article embarks on a discussion about complicity and critical analysis within border and migration studies. The study of borders and migration in the context of the EU is a highly politicized issue, and several scholars have pointed out that critical research easily comes to serve into a "knowledge loop" (Hess, 2010), or play part in the proliferation of a "migration business" (Andersson, 2014). In this article, I will argue that in order to not reproduce the vocabulary or object-making of that which we study, we need to study processes of scale-making (Tsing, 2000) and emphasise the multiplicity of borders (Andersen & Sandberg, 2012). In the article, I therefore present three strategies for critical analysis: First, I suggest critically assessing the locations of fieldwork, and the ways in which these either mirror or distort dominant narratives about the borders of Europe. Secondly, I probe into the differences and similarities between the interlocutors' and researchers' objects of inquiry. Finally, I discuss the purpose of 'being there', in the field, in relation to ethnographic knowledge production. I ask whether we might leave behind the idea of ethnography as evidence or revelations, and rather focus on ethnography as additions. In conclusion, I argue that instead of critical distance, we as scholars should nurture the capacity of critical complicity.

Keywords
border and migration studies; border officials; critical analysis; ethnographic knowledge; EU border enforcement

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Method as Border: Articulating 'Inclusion/Exclusion' as an Academic Concern in Migration and Border Research in Europe" edited by Kolar Aparna (Radboud University, The Netherlands), Joris Schapendonk (Radboud University, The Netherlands) and Cesar Merlín-Escorza (Radboud University, The Netherlands).

1. Introduction

When I carried out research among border officials in the EU between 2015 and 2017, I experienced how I was at times recognized by gatekeepers and interlocutors as a knowledge producer who could feed into the "knowledge loop," as ethnologist Sabine Hess (2010) has called it. Drawing on her research in a European migration control organisation, Hess argues that she was granted research access because the organisation expected her to provide insights that could make the organisation more self-aware and efficient (Hess, 2010, p. 112). In my research, I also had the impression that my status as a potential knowledge provider granted me access to interviews with border officials and access to border-control premises. Did this precondition, however, mean that my research and analysis was bound to be absorbed into a 'knowledge loop,' bound to be rendered part of an efficiency strategy—and in which ways would that be a problem?

Based on such field research experiences, and on the questions arising from them, I will engage in a discussion about complicity and reproduction within critical border and migration. Over the past two decades, the enforcement of European borders has been emblematic of discussions about Europe's role in the world, of the dire consequences of economic globalisation and the pitfalls of neo-liberal democracy. By consequence, border and migration studies is a very politicised field, in which scholars must consider how their data, insights, and

conclusions circulate. Critical scholars have pointed to the study of illegalised migrants as "epistemic violence" (De Genova, 2002, p. 422), in that such study reproduces the categorisations of state actors. Also, migration scholar Franck Duvëll have warned against the conflation of political jargon, technical terms, and scholarly language (Düvell, 2009, pp. 339–340). In the book *Illegality Inc.*, anthropologist Ruben Andersson (2014) discusses these issues in terms of "complicity." In his ethnography of the European border regime, he describes illegalised migration to Europe as a business that constantly adds fuel to its own engine; a business which, beyond state actors and migrants, involves many other actors, for instance academics, journalists, activists, populations, and private companies. Andersson argues that migration research often becomes part of a migration business which endlessly produces new problems with new solutions, which create new problems and so forth.

The notion of a migrant engine that feeds itself is very intriguing and sets an important critical agenda point for border and migration research, in that it reminds us to be cautious not to tie ourselves to the system. However, when critical research tries to remove itself from blindly feeding the machine to critiquing the system, where does that locate the researcher? Do we move from a place deep within the machinery to a place outside of it?

In this article, I suggest a pathway that aspires to frame critical research beyond such a dichotomy of either being tied to the system or being able to critique from a distance. Rather, I suggest that we acknowledge complicity as a condition for any ethnography, in as much as we add to this world, when we describe and define. Acknowledging our complicity urges us to continually and critically assess the inherent assumptions of our research designs. Therefore, in the following, I will discuss three analytical strategies that can add to the conversation on the future of critical border and migration studies.

First, I discuss the politics of choosing fieldwork locations. Secondly, I discuss the politics of the research object, suggesting the importance of not mirroring that of our interlocutors. Finally, to address the discussion about how critical research is received beyond the academy, I discuss fieldwork as additions rather than revelations. In theoretical terms, I suggest that critical analysis foregrounds the multiple, ongoing processes of object-making. By doing so, we might be able to avoid the reproduction of the vocabulary, scales, or connections of that which we study, and we might be able to reposition our complicity.

2. The Critical Promise of Studying the State and Its Institutions

This article builds on research carried out among border officials at three border enforcement sites in the realm of the EU between 2015 and 2017. The research was based on qualitatively informed fieldwork conducted amongst officials who police borders within the Schengen Area and the EU. These three sites were the Danish–German land border, the airport in Copenhagen, and the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM). The fieldwork material consists of interviews with border officials as well as participant observations during working situations. With this material I have explored how concerns and discussions regarding expectations, quality, and professionalism came to matter in the everyday practice of border enforcement (Kristensen, 2019, 2020a, 2020b).

Over the past years, there has been a growing interest in ethnographically informed studies of border enforcement and migration control (Aas & Gundhus, 2015; Borrelli & Lindberg, 2018; Côté-Boucher, Infantino, & Salter, 2014; Follis, 2012; Hall, 2012; Schwell, 2008). Broadly speaking, these studies are interested in understanding the rationales, the sense-making, and the tasks and routines of border and migration officials. Ethnographic enquiries into state authorities and bureaucracies have also shown how mundane everyday practices (Navaro-Yashin, 2002) and emotional investments (Laszczkowski & Reeves, 2017) hold the potential to highlight the state's sociality and materiality. Taking the state and its actors as the object of study emphasises the processes through which the state comes to appear as an entity that stands "above" society (Navaro-Yashin, 2002), able to fixate the border and make territory "stick" (Reeves, 2011). In that regard, the study of state practices sometimes comes to promise a somewhat emancipatory outcome. In a review article of what they call the "hope boom," anthropologists Nauja Kleist and Stef Jansen (2016) observe that recent trends within anthropological studies seem to build on an implicit 'hope against all odds,' which by emphasising uncertainties and contingencies try to counter dystopian descriptions of corrupted and all-encompassing systems. These kinds of analyses of uncertainties seem to imply a different and better future (Kleist & Jansen, 2016, pp. 378–379). In a similar sense, the study of the state and its practice can be understood as being engaged in a critical project, which builds on a (more or less) conscious hope for a future that can bring *other ways* of doing things.

The study of state practices also allows for a critical scrutiny of politics disguised as technicalities. According to anthropologist Karolina S. Follis (2012), the study of infrastructures and institutions can serve as a reminder and a warning. In her studies, Follis shows how the migration-management industry—with its "sanitization of language pertaining to repressive practices (for example, 'capacity building,' 'migration management,' 'best practices')" (Follis, 2012, p. 208)—renders the political implications of these practices invisible and thus also less accountable. Follis argues that, by studying the state's border enforcement practices, ethnographers can bring forth the political and ethical consequences, which are effaced in the language used by the state.

A critical scholarship, then, must be cautious not to reproduce the vocabulary of state actors, but instead to

keep a critical distance. The question, of course, is what sort of critical distance? In the following, I present a theoretical framework which I suggest can pave the way for not only critical distance, but critical complicity.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the article "The Global Situation," written at the culmination of economic, political, and scholarly fascination with globalisation, anthropologist Anna Tsing proposes a way to study "the global" without getting lost in what she refers to as its "charisma" (Tsing, 2000, p. 328). Scholars of globalisation should avoid being carried away by the promises of globalisation in a way that would remove the critical eye for the sizes, scales, and worlds that globalisation rhetoric produces, she argues. Globalisation might make scholars aware of interconnectedness, but it also draws them inside its rhetoric, making them blind to its internal assumptions. Tsing argues that the problem is that "we describe the landscape imagined within [globalisation] rather than the politics and cultures of scale making" (Tsing, 2000, p. 330). She therefore proposes an analytical approach that maintains an interest in the interconnectedness of practices while at the same time remaining attentive to globalist wishes and fantasies. According to Tsing, the task for critical analysis will be to locate and specify globalist projects and dreams—"with their contradictory as well as charismatic logics and their messy as well as effective encounters and translations" (Tsing, 2002, p. 330).

To my mind, Tsing's twenty-year old warning about falling prey to the logics of globalisation is a very fruitful reminder for border and migration studies today, too. In a field where very powerful definitions of the logics, connections, and workings of the EU border system are circulated, critical scholars must stay attuned to not reproduce the landscape imagined *within* the EU border system itself, but rather describe the politics and cultures of *making* such a landscape, to paraphrase Tsing.

In their studies of European borderlands, ethnologists Marie Sandberg and Dorte Andersen opt for performativity and multiplicity as analytical strategies to approach such scale-making. Andersen and Sandberg build on the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), which approaches objects as performed through heterogeneous and socio-material networks (Andersen, 2012; Sandberg, 2009). Whereas the focus on performativity is widely used in critical border and migration studies (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Salter, 2012), multiplicity and simultaneity are often given less attention. Building on STS scholar Annemarie Mol's book *The Body Multiple* (Mol, 2002), Andersen and Sandberg propose studying the borders of Europe through the lens of multiplicity, which "refers not simply to diversity but points to the fact that the different ways any given object or phenomenon is handled also enact specific versions of it; slightly different versions, a multiple reality" (Sandberg & Andersen, 2012, p. 7). The multiplicity approach shows how different—and at times contradictory—versions of the border coexist: The border is not *either* present *or* absent, *either* territorial *or* ideological; it can be both/and, and the analytical interest is in studying under which conditions the border does what, and how the different versions of border coexist, collide, or align with each other (Sandberg, 2009). In this regard, different versions of borders are not conflated into aspects of the same border regime; instead, the differences, tensions, and incompatibilities are kept foregrounded throughout the analyses.

Departing from this brief theoretical framework, I will in the following discuss three ways in which I have tried to bring such processes to the fore in my own research design. First, I discuss the politics of the location of fieldwork, arguing to take out the pace, drama, and urgency characterising the rhetoric of border and migration studies as an analytical strategy, to rethink how we can provide critical food for thought. Secondly, I discuss the gains from probing into the similarities and differences between the objects of study that we and our interlocutors point to. Finally, I discuss the character of the knowledge we as researchers produce about border enforcement in the EU, suggesting that we focus on additions rather than revelations. Finally, I suggest that complicity is a condition for every ethnography, and that researchers will have to continually revisit the scales, objects, and connections that we make in our analyses.

4. The Politics of Location

A feat of critical border and migration studies has been to show the reproductive pitfalls in pointing out migrants, asylum seekers, or undocumented travellers as objects of research; and studies have called for reflexivity in the conceptualization of researcher–researched interactions (e.g., Aparna & Schapendonk, 2018). The lesson learnt is that we as researchers must be acutely aware of the structures of the stories we choose to tell based on someone else's words and experiences. In the following, I will argue that the location of, and interaction with, our field sites can be critically examined in a similar vein.

In a blog post, which discusses the ethics of field research in border-enforcement facilities, anthropologist Katerina Rozakou (2017) urges researchers to critically assess *why* they seek to enter certain places. Rozakou discusses her attempts to gain access to a notorious migrant camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, which with its location just 30 kilometres from the Turkish coast has been a central location in the struggles over European borders and migration for more than two decades. Attempting to gain access to the camp, she was met with the accusation that her presence was only adding to the commotion in the camp. At the entrance of the camp, she was met by a guard who stated:

> People come and say, 'I am writing an article.' They just appear on the front gate and they demand to

> enter. Everybody uses the same excuses: I want to see how the space has changed; I am not like the others [researchers, journalists]; I have a different approach; I am not visiting the zoo. (Rozakou, 2017)

Like Ruben Andersson, who warned scholars not to add fuel to the "business" of illegal migration, Rozakou points to the pitfalls of a critical scholarship that repeats the same narratives or draws the same crisis map by choosing to single out the same places as locations of interest for critical research. Rozakou emphasises the importance of gaining access to politically and ethically controversial places, but nevertheless warns against flocking to the same over-researched places. She laments the fact that researchers, journalists, and others who seek entry to such places too often only manage to offer accounts that could just as well have been written based on already accessible information (Rozakou, 2017). The problem with singling out the same places as objects of research is that it can lead to research fatigue among gatekeepers and potential informants, and that the preoccupation with the same kind of place and interlocutors can create a distorted image of the situation. In other words, the singling out of the same places, risks mirroring the topography of crisis as defined by authorities, politicians, and journalists. With her text, Rozakou therefore raises the important question of where and why we locate our fieldwork, and she reminds us to ask: Who benefits from our 'being there,' and even more importantly, who does not?

In my research, I have engaged with what we might call the politics of location by trying to combine unlikely border enforcement locations within and beyond the EU. I studied border-procedure modernisation projects carried out by EU border officials at the Moldovan–Ukrainian border and I combined these fieldwork insights with material from the police department in the airport of Copenhagen, Denmark, which serves both international and domestic flights, controlling both travel within the Schengen Area and into the Schengen Area. Finally, I countered these two locations with fieldwork centred on the Danish–German land border. In other words, my fieldwork took place both outside EU/Schengen areas, at the external borders of the Schengen Area, and on the internal borders in a supposedly frictionless 'borderless Europe.'

While the European border and asylum policies crisis was unfolding in yet another European country each week, in October 2015 I was visiting the offices of EUBAM in Odessa, Ukraine. I had travelled there to study how EU border enforcement was presented in terms of 'smooth and efficient border management' and how it was designed to replace the perceived militaristic, slow, and inefficient border procedures of previous times and regimes. The self-understanding of the border procedures that were promoted was indeed that they would replace an old-fashioned and outdated form of border enforcement.

My position outside of the EU, away from the hotspots of the 'refugee crisis,' came to serve as a sort of inverted telescope (Andersen, Kramsch, & Sandberg, 2015) that made the EU border enforcement system stand out in two ways. First, the 2014 war on Crimea, which resulted in some border officials being sent to war at the Eastern borders of Ukraine, had repositioned the EU border enforcement standards: In times of war, the EU standards and border procedures could eventually get you nowhere. Further, with a crisis unfolding within the EU and Schengen countries, in which fences were now being erected, the concept of border as expansion and cooperation was relativised further, losing its universalising self-understanding by the hour. From my position at the Moldovan–Ukrainian border, the ordering of past, present, and future embedded in the border enforcement regimes of the EU stood out as exactly that: an ordering, rather than a teleological or necessary development. Further, the juxtaposition between EUBAM and EU proper relativized the understanding of EU border procedures, which presented itself as an efficient, modern, and universal approach to borders (see Kristensen, 2019).

Six months later, in Spring 2016, I was granted access to study the Danish police and their border enforcement along the Danish–German land border, at a time when temporary border controls had been introduced by the Danish government, with the aim of bringing refugee movements through Europe to a halt. After months of infrastructural chaos at borders and main travel hubs, such as railway stations, all over Europe, when I arrived at the border in early Spring, there was no longer chaos, no longer commotion, and most interestingly: There were no longer any refugees. This peculiar emptiness, in the midst of a deep and unsolved crisis of border and asylum policy, was intriguing to study, and prompted me to consider: What kind of emptiness and calmness has been installed at the Danish-German borders, and on what grounds did such emptiness and calmness rely? The absence of the crises from that North-European corner was haunting in as much as the crises had not ended, and the analysis of this peculiar emptiness and calmness raised questions regarding the moral implications of such emptiness and calmness.

In that way, the Danish–German border and the Moldovan–Ukrainian border distorts mediatized definitions of places of relevance in relation to the EU's border and asylum policies. Furthermore, the two sites work to distort one another: The contours of the EUBAM-led border management, that positions efficiency tools and cooperation initiatives on the border between Moldova and Ukraine as the future of border enforcement, is altered when juxtaposed with the reintroduction of border control at the Danish border. The image of a 'modern' border enforcement—and the associated terms of efficiency and security—is deeply shattered in this juxtaposition, in which a border at the centre of the EU (a Danish–German border) chooses border barriers and soldiers,

instead of efficiency measures and cooperation, in order to cope with an unforeseen situation. In that sense, the juxtaposition shatters the universalist self-narrative of expansion as a security strategy.

Showing the presence of the EU in such 'unlikely' places, these borders are posited as just as controversial, important, and constitutive for the bordering of Europe—for its effects, failures, shortcomings, and successes—as other, more visibly dramatic or controversial borders. Showing these unlikely places, in other words, provides the opportunity to engage in a project of unsettling the "imagined geography" of Europe (Massey, 2005). The stories I was able to generate in these sites were not classical hotspot stories; they were not stories of explicit drama, tragedy, or urgency. They were perhaps, at times, quite uneventful. It was, however, my clear ambition to slow down the tempo of studies of border enforcement as a means by which to avoid reproducing the language, speed, and urgency embedded in the crisis narratives created by border enforcement actors in the EU. Therefore, the ethnographic material and the analytical claims do not have validity in so far as they are measured by a yardstick of topicality or revelations. Rather, such an asynchronous and unlikely tour through the EU border system provides the possibility of bringing other stories to the fore, with attention paid to other kinds of connections. By not pointing to the same places, the same speed, and the same dramas, a *not-being there* can be used productively, so to speak. By attending to the seemingly mundane, rather than the overtly dramatic, we are given the chance to contemplate what makes the violent or chaotic appear and disappear from certain vantage points. Instead of locating and documenting a centre of the drama, we can engage in working with patterns of absence and presence (Sandberg, 2009, pp. 114–115), and thereby discuss how border practices and the subsequent topography of drama are distributed between places. Such approaches allow us to engage in the study of the production of the landscape of the border system in Europe, rather than mirroring the system's own topography.

5. The Politics of the Research Object

As my fieldwork developed, I realized the difference between (not only my interlocutors' and my own approaches or preoccupations, but also) our *objects* of inquiry. During my research among border officials, I experienced how the combination of gaining access to premises and interlocutors, while also insisting on telling other stories, was challenging. Like the border officials I studied, I was preoccupied with the bordering of Europe. However, the object they put together as 'the borders of Europe' differed from my own.

In Hess' study of 'knowledge loops' within border and migration management, she describes how the supposed congruence between her scientific work and the outcome that her migration management interlocutors were expecting, sometimes got her into trouble because her knowledge project was in fact not always compatible with theirs (Hess, 2010). In my case, being recognised as a knowledge producer was also a double-edged sword. For professionally trained border officials, the borders of Europe involved laws, regulations, legislation, and a Frontex-vocabulary. For me, it involved modes of cooperation and transformation, expectations and responsibilities, everyday speculations, and work anecdotes. When I, as a researcher from a university, did not seem to know all of the regulations, laws, or policies or terms, my position as a knowledge producer was sometimes questioned.

This discrepancy between objects of inquiry was especially clear in my attempts to study the Danish borders with Germany. Early in my fieldwork endeavours, I talked on the phone with an instructor from the Danish Police Academy. Pondering how to help me establish contacts, he asked: "Can you even study the borders there?" He went on to explain how the actual control of the borderline between the two Schengen member countries, Denmark and Germany, had transitioned into immigration control. Within Schengen legislation, border control was only conducted at first entry into the Schengen area, whereas the crossing of borders within the area was no longer an act subjected to control within the Schengen area. Instead, the immigration control (the control of residency permits and visas) within the Schengen area (in cities, asylum centres, and workplaces) was strengthened. This is the process that much scholarship refers to as the 're-bordering' of space (Andreas, 2000, p. 3).

The fact that I was interested in studying the enforcement of borders at an internal border within the Schengen area, then, called for moments of misunderstandings. Midway through my fieldwork, I was called in for a meeting with a police superior, who I had not previously been in contact with. He had come to hear about me, a researcher, interviewing staff in the airport and at the Danish–German border. The purpose of the meeting was to teach me the difference between the EU's 'external' and 'internal' borders; to make me understand that my interest in conducting field research at the Danish–German border was a bit off, or misunderstood. Curiously, this meeting took place precisely when several EU member states were closing their borders due to a growing disbelief in the Schengen regulations' ability to solve growing problems via-à-vis the unfolding crises of the EU migration and asylum policies and refugee arrivals of Summer 2015. Still, in my email correspondence and in the meeting, my interlocutors maintained the worldview that they were put in place to manage. They insisted that there was no 'border-related work' to be studied at the Danish–German border. This was because 'border' in their view and vocabulary indicated an 'external border,' and thus equated to a completely different set of regulations, rules, problems, and solutions (even with the temporary reintroduction of border control). Instead, the work being done at the Danish border with Germany

had to be addressed in terms of cross-border activities, crime prevention, or immigration control.

The instructor who pondered the borderless border and the officers who lectured me on the different types of borders were, of course, correct. In EU/FRONTEX-vocabulary it was inaccurate to address the border between Denmark and Germany in terms of a 'border.' This was obvious to everyone working with these matters; border control had been relegated to external borders and, within the Schengen area, the police carried out immigration control. This distinction was printed all over every FRONTEX publication, taught in every border control master class, and also endlessly discussed in the scholarly literature that I had been reading for years. I knew that I was being imprecise when I insisted on seeing how 'the border' was enforced in a place where there was no border. At the same time, I was convinced that it was both fruitful and important to approach that borderline in terms of a border and border enforcement—there was indeed an international borderline, was there not?

To be sure, I was not disinterested in my interlocutors' configurations of the border, I was more than invested in studying that, too. However, I was cautious not to conflate *their* configurations with those of *my* research design, and I was guided by the idea that the object of study should not mirror that of the border system itself, but rather critically study the scale-making processes of such border system. The fact that an international border could be dislocated from the word 'enforcement' altogether is indicative of a powerful object and scale-making process, to follow Tsing (2000). Such a scale-making project can, however, be foregrounded and distorted when the researcher brings other scale-making projects to the field, so to speak. If we do so, we get the chance to study how these different objects relate to or differ from each other, and how and when they collide or co-exist. In other words, we can engage in a project of analysing the border multiple (Andersen & Sandberg, 2012). An analytical consequence of the emphasis on the multiplicity and simultaneity of borders is furthermore that we as critical scholars intervene in our fields by insisting on bringing to the fore other configurations of the object, and thereby we do not merely passively map, we actively add to.

6. Critical Analysis as Revelations or as Additions?

However, when critical analysis refrains from mirroring the language and objects of our interlocutors, we run the risk of not being understood, or heard. The discussion about how knowledge travels from academic journals and onwards to interlocutors, policy makers, or politicians is complicated, and could indeed be the starting point of a research article in itself. In the final part of this article, I will however touch upon this discussion. I will do so by arguing that yet another way to critically assess our research designs is by carefully examining the consequences of our analytical processing of fieldwork data. Again, I will start the discussion in conversation with anthropologists Ruben Andersson and Katerina Rozakou, who through their respective studies of border enforcement measures in the EU have contributed to the furthering of critical analysis.

In a reflective article about the role of academics in politicized fields of study, anthropologist Ruben Andersson contemplates the difficulties of being a public voice (Andersson, 2018). He recounts that, in newspaper interviews and panel debates, journalists and discussion partners have boiled down his ethnography about the atrocities that illegalized migrants face, to an anecdote, or dismissed it as a point of view among others (Andersson, 2018). His accounts show that when ethnography is boiled down to anecdotal knowledge, the ethnography is posited as a non-generalizable experience; juxtaposed to generalized and/or statistical knowledge. Also, when ethnography is posited as a point of view, it can be dismissed as biased or politically motivated. Andersson shows how both pitfalls constitute major obstacles for ethnographically-informed border and migration research.

As hinted at by Rozakou, we might need to examine the conditions of knowledge production during the processes of fieldwork and analysis (Rozakou, 2019). In an article about the politics of gaining access to politicized field sites, Rozakou argues that the knowledge generated from limited access to a restricted field site will itself also be limited. Critical scholars must, therefore, be acutely aware of the nature of the access they gain, and how this specific access reflects the knowledge they produce (Rozakou, 2019, pp. 79–80). Rozakou thereby urges us to critically assess who opens the door, when, how, and why, and thus reminds us not to confuse fieldwork access with access to evidence. Following Rozakou's lead, we might even take this further and understand fieldwork, instead, as access into the manifold possibilities of analysis. Rather than approaching ethnographies as evidence, I suggest that we might gain something from positing ethnography as an *addition* to the stories that are normally told.

To elaborate this point, I will share a situation which took place during my fieldwork, as I joined two officers on a 'gate check' in the airport of Copenhagen. In the vocabulary of the airport's border enforcement officials, gate checks are randomized immigration controls of internal Schengen flights, e.g., flights that are not subject to border control as travellers come from another EU/Schengen destination. On the day of the field note shared below, the gate check was performed at a flight arrival. I described the gate check as follows:

> I am accompanying two police officers to a gate check. The gate check is performed at a flight arrival, which the police refer to as the 'Somali Express'—an EasyJet arrival from Milano. The plane lands, and the passenger control begins. I stand awkwardly in the

> background. Officer 1 and Officer 2 let most passengers pass without showing passports. Only people of colour are asked to show their passports and asked about the purpose of their stay. I get quite uneasy seeing how bluntly consistent they are in their ethnic profiling. As they work, I am wondering how to approach this in my conversation with them. A family is pulled aside to have their papers looked through. They have two small children who are crying a little, and I have to really pull myself together to not start to cry, too. The family's papers are apparently in order; in any case, they can continue. After the check of passengers had ended, Officer 1 says to me, "So, you could say that we mostly take aside those that are a bit more tanned than the rest of us." Officer 1 brings up the topic himself, I haven't said anything. "But we cannot stop a lot of Danes just to make it look nice," Officer 2 inserts. That is an argument that I have met before among police officers. "We take a few Danes every once in a while," Officer 1 explains. Both, however, share the understanding that the reason they pick the people they do, is because all experience shows that these are the ones who violate the immigration law. I ask the two officers about the article in the Schengen Border Code that prohibits discrimination, and how they try to ensure the balance between profiling and discrimination. "Well," Officer 2 explains, "you have to be able to account for why you have stopped someone." In other words, and according to the regulations, you must be able to document the profiling that was the basis for the control. "But it's true, it really does not look good," I insist "to be stopping only people with another ethnicity than you." "No, but that is how it is. Where I live, it is also a certain group of people that causes all the trouble.," Officer 2 pondered. As we walked back from the gate-check and towards the lunchroom, our talk died out, leaving the questions of the discrepancies between ideals of non-discrimination and demands for border enforcement unsolved. (Author's field note, February 2015)

This field note points in many directions: The note portrays a situation in which people of colour are subject to discriminatory actions in the name of border enforcement security. The fieldnote also recounts a simultaneously tense and everyday situation in the airport, in which not only the passengers, but also me as a researcher and the police officers were emotionally embedded. The fieldnote also contains a range of explicitly racist ways of addressing ethnicity (e.g., "more tanned than us," "Danes" defined as white) as well as implicit boundary work that both the police officers and I, all three white, participated in by referring to the people in question as "other than us," as having "another ethnicity." The question I want to focus on in this context, however, is whether the situation recounted in my field notes reveals the EU border system as racist and discriminatory. Does it document it?

I would argue that rather than a documentation (an end station), a field note like the above can be the starting point for a discussion and further exploration. Why do the officers address their choice of passengers themselves: What about me, what about them, what about the situation makes them bring it up? Do they feel uneasy about their actions, which stand out clearer to themselves, because of my presence? Do they assume that I have certain prejudices about how they work? Which modes of explanation do they bring to the fore: Why wouldn't it 'look good' to take (white) Danes aside for control; to whom, and why? Also, what are the structural and historical conditions that tie together with racist slurs such as the 'Somali Express' (e.g., because of colonial ties, Italy is one of the few EU member countries which recognizes Somali passports as legitimate travel documents)? Why do I feel like crying when the family is taken aside (do I assume that they feel humiliated? Do I feel embarrassed that I might probably never be subjected to ethnic profiling, as I am white?). This is to mention but a few of the questions that this field note raises.

As we unfold this fieldnote, the situations thicken; more questions arise, and by questioning perhaps we start thinking the borders in terms of different connections, conditions, places, and times. In that sense, the fieldnote is posited in terms of additions (for further questioning and conversation), rather than revelations (that document or label). Arguing so, I am inspired by anthropologists Natalia Brichet and Frida Hastrup, who in a dismissal of critique as the unveiling of hidden information about dubious agendas write that "critique…is not a matter of distance or demolition, but rather attention towards possibilities of thinking beyond the stereotypes" (Brichet & Hastrup, 2014, p. 78). In that regard, the unveiling of hidden information or dubious agendas would assume an already established understanding of the object and its contexts. Brichet and Hastrup, therefore, underline the importance of providing room for letting *other* configurations of the object emerge in fieldwork encounters and written analyses.

Indeed, we need evidence of violations such as racism and violence, and many scholars forcefully provide these, alongside journalists, international rapporteurs, and activists. However, a crucial role of critical scholarship can also be to show the *otherwise*, to add to our understanding of how the border becomes productive in everyday border enforcement. By doing so, we might nurture the capacity of being able to see 'beyond the stereotypes,' to not singularise the objects we deal with, and we will be able to contribute the capacity to see multiplicities instead of singularities, complexities instead of simplicities.

7. Conclusion

In the beginning of the article, I suggested that the study of state practices, such as border enforcement, relies on a sort of hope of other ways of doing things. A hope

that these other ways of portraying and telling the story can push for change by making the opposition against a system seem open-ended, instead of stuck in a 'loop' or 'business.' Through the article I have proposed that such change might come about if we as critical scholars nurture the capacity to bring together unlikely locations, objects, and questions, thereby moulding our objects of research in ways that connect differently from what we are normally presented with. The strategies for pushing such *otherwise* that I presented, was inspired by an understanding of the border as multiple (Andersen & Sandberg, 2012), and by Tsing's call to study the landscape of object- and scale-making (Tsing, 2000). More specifically, I discussed the engagement in a politics of location, the possibility of critically assessing the relationship between the objects that our interlocutors point to and the objects we as researchers describe, and, finally, the careful examination of the sort of knowledge we can contribute.

In the introduction, I also asked whether we, as critical researchers, are deemed to add to the "knowledge loop" (Hess, 2010), and whether we thereby are tied to the system. Based on the above reflections, I argue that we have the possibility of making additions that not only add fuel to the engine of the migration business machine, so to speak, but which open up other ways of conceiving the objects of inquiry. The knowledge we can contribute as critical scholars will be more than evidence and revelations (which can be disputed as anecdotal or politically motivated) if we attune ourselves to the making of objects in the multitude, to how things, places, and practices are separated and connected and how everyday practices seek to singularize. In other words, the attention to scale-making processes and multiplicity of borders implies recognizing that we are not merely involved in a passive practice of mapping multiplicities and scale-making processes (at a critical distance); rather, we are actively involved in drawing connections, asking questions, and carving out objects (critically complicit). And herein lies the critical potential: to help nurture the skill of being critically complicit by adding other connections.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Kolar Aparna and Joris Schapendonk for the invitation to participate in this thematic issue, and for their support throughout the writing, editing, and publication phases.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Aas, K. F., & Gundhus, H. O. (2015). Policing humanitarian borderlands: Frontex, human rights and the precariousness of life. *British Journal of Criminology*, *55*(1), 1–18.

Andersen, D. J. (2012). The multiple politics of borders: Images of the Slovenian–Croatian border on Istria from the perspective of an ethnographer on the move. In D. J. Andersen, M. Klatt, & M. Sandberg (Eds.), *The border multiple: The practicing of borders between public policy and everyday life in a re-scaling Europe* (pp. 141–159). London: Routledge.

Andersen, D. J., & Sandberg, M. (2012). Introduction. In D. J. Andersen, M. Klatt, & M. Sandberg (Eds.), *The border multiple: The practicing of borders between public policy and everyday life in a re-scaling Europe* (pp. 15–34). London: Routledge.

Andersen, D. J., Kramsch, O. T., & Sandberg, M. (2015). Inverting the telescope on borders that matter: Conversations in Café Europa. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, *23*(4), 459–476.

Andersson, R. (2014). *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine migration and the business of bordering Europe*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Andersson, R. (2018). The price of impact: Reflections on academic outreach amid the 'refugee crisis.' *Social Anthropology*, *26*(2), 222–237.

Andreas, P. (2000). Introduction: The wall after the wall. In P. Andreas & T. Snyder (Eds.), *The wall around the West: State borders and immigration controls in North America and Europe* (pp. 1–11). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Aparna, K., & Schapendonk, J. (2018). *Shifting itineraries of asylum hospitality: Towards a process geographical approach of guest-host relations*. *Geoforum*.

Borrelli, L. M., & Lindberg, A. (2018). The creativity of coping: Alternative tales of moral dilemmas among migration control officers. *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies*, *4*(3), 163–178.

Brichet, N., & Hastrup, F. (2014). Producing gold from a Greenlandic Mountain. In *More than human: Wreckage and recovery—Exploring the nature of nature* (pp. 75–85). Aarhus: Aarhus University. Retrieved from http://anthropocene.au.dk/fileadmin/Anthropocene/Workingpapers/AURA_workingpaperVol2.pdf

Côté-Boucher, K., Infantino, F., & Salter, M. B. (2014). Border security as practice: An agenda for research. *Security dialogue*, *45*(3), 195–208.

De Genova, N. P. (2002). Migrant "illegality" and deportability in everyday life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *31*(1), 419–447.

Düvell, F. (2009). Migration, minorities and marginality: New directions in European migration research. In C. Rumford (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of European studies* (pp. 328–346). London: SAGE.

Follis, K. S. (2012). *Building fortress Europe: The Polish–Ukrainian frontier*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hall, A. (2012). *Border watch: Cultures of immigration, detention and control*. London: Pluto Press.

Hess, S. (2010). 'We are facilitating states!' An ethnographic analysis of the ICMPD. In M. Geiger & A. Pécoud (Eds.), *The politics of international migration management* (pp. 96–118). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kleist, N., & Jansen, S. (2016). Introduction: Hope over time—Crisis, immobility and future-making. *History and Anthropology*, *27*(4), 373–392.

Kristensen, M. P. (2019). *Relocating Europe: Border* officials *and their everyday attempts to stabilise borders* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Kristensen, M. P. (2020a). Low-quality border control? A cultural analysis of alternative border imaginaries among police officers in the airport of Copenhagen. *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, *2020*(1), 169–186.

Kristensen, M. P. (2020b). At kende grænsen. Spekulationer over fremtiden blandt politifolk på den dansktyske grænse [Knowing the border. Everyday speculations among police officers at the Danish-German border]. *Kulturstudier*, *11*(1), 81–104.

Laszczkowski, M., & Reeves, M. (2017). Introduction: Affective states—Entanglements, suspensions, suspicions. *Social Analysis*, *59*(4), 1–14.

Massey, D. (2005). *For space*. London: Sage Publications.

Mol, A. (2002). *The body multiple: Ontology in medical practice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Navaro-Yashin, Y. (2002). *Faces of the state: Secularism and public life in Turkey*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Parker, N., & Vaughan-Williams, N. (2009). Lines in the sand? Towards an agenda for critical border studies. *Geopolitics*, *14*(3), 582–587.

Reeves, M. (2011). Fixing the border: On the affective life of the state in Southern Kyrgyzstan. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *29*(5), 905–923.

Rozakou, K. (2017). Access to a hot field: A self-reflexive account of research in the Moria Camp, Lesvos. *Border Criminologies*. Retrieved from https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2017/11/access-hot-field

Rozakou, K. (2019). 'How did you get in?' Research access and sovereign power during the 'migration crisis' in Greece. *Social Anthropology*, *27*(S1), 68–83.

Salter, M. B. (2012). Theory of the /: The suture and critical border studies. *Geopolitics*, *17*(4), 734–755.

Sandberg, M. (2009). Performing the border: Cartographic enactments of the German–Polish border among German and Polish high-school pupils. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, *18*(1), 107–128.

Schwell, A. (2008). *Europa an der Oder: Die Konstruktion europäischer Sicherheit an der deutsch-polnischen Grenze* [Europe by the oder: The construction of European security at the German–Polish border]. Berlin: transcript.

Tsing, A. (2000). The global situation. *Cultural Anthropology*, *15*(3), 327–360.

About the Author

Marlene Paulin Kristensen holds a PhD from the University of Copenhagen. Marlene has done research into European border imaginaries, and her research combines the fields of European studies, migration studies, ethnography of the state, and cultural analysis. She is on the Editorial Board of *Kulturstudier* (DK). Marlene is currently on parental leave.

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183-2803)

Social Inclusion is a peer-reviewed open access journal which provides academics and policy-makers with a forum to discuss and promote a more socially inclusive society.

The journal encourages researchers to publish their results on topics concerning social and cultural cohesiveness, marginalized social groups, social stratification, minority-majority interaction, cultural diversity, national identity, and core-periphery relations, while making significant contributions to the understanding and enhancement of social inclusion worldwide.

www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion

COGITATIO