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Visual Methodology in Migration Studies

New Possibilities, Theoretical
Implications, and Ethical Questions

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Karolina Nikielska-Sekula • Amandine Desille
Editors

Visual Methodology in Migration Studies

New Possibilities, Theoretical Implications,
and Ethical Questions

 Springer

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Preface

People having experienced migration – including those who were forced to leave their home as well as the traces of their passage and presence – are increasingly subjected to the production of “visual products”. Photographers, filmmakers, journalists, scholars or activists travel around the globe (at least before the COVID-19 crisis, which is ongoing at the moment of writing this preface) to document the situation. For example, they show us what they captured at sensitive border crossing points and in refugee slum camps. Among these visual products, the picture of the small Aylan Kurdi lying dead on a Turkish beach in 2015 often pops in our mind. Besides, there are now many documentary films available on migration issues shot across the globe by reporters or documentarists. The border between the USA and Mexico has inspired many of them. In fact, migration has been an important theme in cinema for decades. Today there are also fictional series dealing with migration issues on global streaming platforms, such as Netflix. Finally, theatre has also joined the chorus. Many plays exploring themes connected to migration have been produced in the past few years. Some of them have even been financially supported by the European Commission.

In general terms, images on/of migration abound in media and visual arts. However, scientific visual approaches in the field of ethnic and migration studies need to be developed further. This is what I was calling for in a piece published in the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies* in 2015. Most of the time, when scholars in our field use images in their work, it is for mere illustrative purposes and less as a methodological pillar in our research design. The present volume edited by Karolina Nikielska-Sekula and Amandine Desille is a most valuable contribution to the development of visual approaches in our field of research. It brilliantly fills a gap in the literature and provides us with a tool to think about new methodological developments in qualitative research in ethnic and migration studies.

The group of international – both early-career and senior – scholars gathered by the editors cover several issues and different perspectives in a very relevant manner for visual ethnic and migration studies. Some of them address complex epistemological challenges. Others deal more with more concrete research issues. In general,

this book diverges from mainstream research approaches to migration, which are too often policy driven. It is really an encouragement to think in a complex way on a very intricate set of social issues – the one forming the total social phenomenon that we call migration.

Brussels, Belgium
5 May 2020

Marco Martiniello

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We are most grateful for the great group of authors involved in this project, who constantly pushed the boundaries of our knowledge and practice, and whose contributions we hope the reader will find as thought provoking as we did.

Each chapter is the result of individual or collective research projects, for which authors have obtained funding, support and sometimes have relied on their own resources for their realization. An important group of authors took part in the MSCA ITN Integrim between 2013 and 2016, and this volume testifies to the long-term commitment of the Integrim network members and their on-going support.

Further funding was obtained during the writing of the book, either for each project presented here or for the publication itself. We are grateful to IMISCOE network for their financial support to enable an open access publication of this volume as well as to the Migrare research group at IGOT-ULisboa and USN for the budget they allocated for copyediting.

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Last but not least, we are grateful to all the participants of these research projects who have been involved at earlier stages and have given consent for the images published here.

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Audience: “...paid day! [*dia pagado*]”

Band member: “And if they [the employers] want to pay you with a cheque...?”

Audience: “No! no! Cash!” [a man makes a gesture with his hand to mimic handing over cash]

Band member: “Yes, only cash! And [you will accept] nothing of the sort, like “tomorrow I pick you up again and I pay you...””

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Chapter 1

Introduction



Amandine Desille and Karolina Nikielska-Sekula

Reality has always been interpreted through the reports given by images
Susan Sontag

As this quote from Susan Sontag (1979, p.153) indicates, images have always accompanied humans as means of interpreting and representing reality. Nevertheless, during approximately the last decade of the twentieth century, new literature addressing images stemmed from various disciplines including history of art and visual studies (Moxey, 2008), approaching images away from their linguistic interpretation to recognise their capacity to convey information that is not always possible to capture with words (Mitchell, 2002). Coined by Goettfried Boehm as the *iconic turn*, and by William Mitchell as the *pictorial turn* (Boehm & Mitchell, 2009), it was then simply referred to as the *visual turn*. Mitchell relates more specifically to art and claims that the pictorial turn is an ability of items to escape the contexts imposed on them by generations of interpreters. Even though images are permanently entangled with language, they ought to be considered independently from it (Mitchell, 2002). Keith Moxey (2008, p. 131) problematised the idea of a “presence” that refers to the ability of images to have their own, independent lives. Images are capable of triggering emotional reactions and carry an emotional charge which is difficult to ignore. They are, therefore, not only transmitters of meanings, but can produce meanings too, independently and sometimes even against the language (Moxey, 2008). Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (2004; Edwards, 2012) went even further in discussing the ability of images to communicate. They focused on the materiality of photographs, arguing that they convey messages not only because of their visual content, but also as material objects “through an embodied engagement with an affective object world, which is

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both constitutive of and constituted through social relations” (Edwards, 2012, p. 221). In light of this divagation, the visual turn is understood by us as the acknowledgment of communication through images independently, or in a great freedom from language. Images benefit from an equal status to words in the production of meanings, both in relation to their visual content, and as material commodities existing in space and time, meaningful for social relationships. As a first disclaimer we shall add that we are conscious that this turn is grounded in western culture and is not necessarily applicable in other socio-cultural contexts.

Are we then producing a book on visual methodologies right after the visual turn? A significant effort in theorising and conceptualising the visual has been made within various disciplines. To mention only a few, Howard Becker (1974) in visual sociology, Lucien Taylor (1994), Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy (1999) and Jay Ruby (2000) in visual anthropology, Chris Jenk (1995) in cultural studies, Gillian Rose (2001) in geography and Sarah Pink (2001) in visual ethnography, all produced fundamental works focusing on the visual in social sciences. This book, however, without diminishing the disciplinary work within the subject, proposes to approach visual methodologies in the specific context of a field of study, adopting an interdisciplinary approach that brings together geography, sociology, anthropology and communication studies. As Adrian Favell (2007, p. 1988) has suggested: “On the face of it, there could hardly be a topic in the contemporary social sciences more naturally ripe for interdisciplinary thinking than migration studies.” In this piece we will attempt to explain why the adoption of visual methodologies in the field of migration studies is of particular interest.

Following the seminal work of John Berger and Jean Mohr (1975), who associated migration issues with images and poetry, there has been a growing interest in visual methodologies in the field of international migrations. This occurs parallel to increasingly numerous visual representations of migrations in the media, which have proved powerful in reshaping European political scenes (Cambre, 2019; Martiniello, 2017). Yet beyond the consensus on the harm they can do to migrants and refugees, little has been done by migration scholars to reflect on this visual abundance. Hence, there is an emergency for a meta-reflection on the ethical ways of employing visuals in the context of migration, the theoretical implications of visualising issues concerning people on the move, and the new possibilities visual methodologies can bring when researching potentially vulnerable subjects such as migrants and refugees.

Another remark we wish to make in this introduction relates to what we mean by “the visual”. This volume deals with visual data (re)produced by scholars. These visual data are, if we follow Banks and Morphy’s definition (1999), what is visual, visible, observable, and what we can experience (rather than what is “intellectual”). Within this, we focus even more particularly on what Banks and Morphy (1999) have called “visual systems”: the processes that result in humans producing visible objects, reflexively constructing their visual environment and communicating by visual means. Overwhelmingly, this collection reassembles “research-initiated production of visual data and meanings” (Pauwels, 2010, p. 551) consisting in three main media: films, photographs and mental maps. The contributors meant to communicate meanings related to migrations partially or primarily by visual means (MacDougall & Taylor, 1998). Following this premise, we would like to further

advance the argument that communication through visuals encompasses a multisensorial approach similar to the one developed by Pink (2007, 2012a, 2012b).

Sight, usually associated with the production of visuals, is not separated from other senses (Edwards, 2012, p. 299, but also Bal, 2003; Pink, 2007, 2012a, 2012b; Cytowic, 2010; Ferrarini, 2017). The act of seeing, therefore, is not “pure” but it relates to other “sense-based activities” (Bal, 2003, p. 9). While collecting visuals in the field, the researcher activates her¹ hearing, touch, smell, and even taste. According to her positionality and previous experiences, these sensorial experiences further project on the data collection and interpretation. The trend to extend the sight to other senses has already entered museums and art galleries, traditionally associated only with seeing (as illustrated by the prohibition to touch the exhibits, to eat inside the exhibition, the injunction to keep silence and the lack of designed scents to accompany the exhibition). Interactive exhibitions are slowly developing in response to this. The visual turn has therefore clearly extended beyond the visual in research practice that acknowledges smells, tastes, voices (music) and textures as equally capable of meaning production and communication. The projects showcased in this volume support the assumption that the visual turn is therefore accompanied and influenced by a “sensory turn” (Edwards & Bhaumik, 2008; Pink, 2012b).

The following is organised in four parts. In the first part, we will distinguish between artistic production and images produced within the framework of academic research. We argue that the objectives of the process of image-production have implications, ethically obliging scholars to reflect on their position, on the context of image-production, and on the impact of their production amongst a wider range of representations. Secondly, we will expand on our argument that visual methodologies are not reduced to sight but engage other senses. We will develop this argument within the specific field of migration studies. In the third part, we will articulate the four claims that correspond to the four sections of this collective work, namely *visuals enable to ground research in places, and focused on the embodied experiences* of persons who have experienced migration; secondly, *visuals tell stories* and hold the potential of multiplying and complexifying accounts of migration; *visual methodologies increase the possibilities for cooperation*, and therefore the need to recognise the competency of participants in knowledge production; and researchers are responsible for *visual representations of migrations*.

1.1 On the Value of Images in Academic Research

Discussion on the ontological status of still and moving images dates back to the invention of photography and film. Despite the initial struggles of these “new inventions” (Bazin, 1960), today both film and photography are recognised as art. Nevertheless, some branches of photography and film, such as documentary, photojournalism, as well

¹Throughout this introduction, we will use the feminine when referring to a human, rather than the neutrally accepted masculine.

as visual methodologies, have a primary purpose of going beyond aesthetic expression (Becker, 1995, 1998; Ruby, 2000). What is more, not everything these genres produce can be and is accepted as art. What is the difference between images as art and images as a research tool? We address this question in this section.

1.1.1 Realism of Still and Moving Images: From Art to Research

In his seminal work *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, film theorist André Bazin (1960) analysed the realism of photography in a manner that made his argument applicable to both still and moving images. He built his claim around the comparison between photography and painting and advocated that while painting assumes the ontological identity of the model and the painting, the photography breaks away from this assumption by making it possible to identify the model as a real human and save her from a spiritual death through the act of remembering. According to Bazin, we ought to believe in the real existence of the subject depicted in photographs. A similar discussion was held about film. Since film was seen as a series of photographic images, the philosophical discussions within film theory picked up the issues relevant primarily for photography and as a result focused on causality of moving images and reproduction (rather than creation) of reality through them (Gaut, 2002, p. 310). Claims on the realism of film (Bazin, 1960) were challenged by the development of digital technologies that put the real existence of depicted subjects in a given time and space in question (Gaut, 2010, p. 49). More than two decades after Bazin, Roland Barthes (1980, p. 9) stated that photography is “the return of the dead”: regardless of the existence (or absence) of the depicted in real life, since the reality displayed by the photograph was caught in a particular moment in time and space, it is now merely non-existent (see also Baudrillard, 1999).

Today the claims on the realism of photography and film are often interpreted twofold. Howard Becker (1979, 1998) suggests that a photograph represents both truth and falsehood. A photograph starts from the exposure of the camera and in this sense it must be true. Yet each picture could have been taken differently, and therefore the photograph is a fabrication. The question to ask, therefore, is not “if the photographs tell the truth”, but “which truth and about what?”. What is more, Becker (1979) states that the truth does not have to be full, and we can never be sure of the proven truth. David MacDougall (2012) refers to similar issues in the context of film production by using the concept of reflexivity. By this he means “contextualizing the content of a film by revealing aspects of its production” (MacDougall, 2012, p. 15) which involves both the context of shooting with the focus on the interactions between the researchers and participants, as well as the context of the depicted situation in the meaning of a “studium” (Barthes, 1980) that makes events “understandable in interpersonal and cultural terms” (MacDougall, 2012, p. 15). Regarding digital film, Lev Manovich (1995, p. 308) stated: “Cinema becomes a

particular branch of painting – painting in time” underlining the constructed character of the reality displayed through films. Similar conclusions were reached by Marcus Banks (1988) in his critical account on the approach to ethnographic films in today’s anthropology. Banks advocated for the non-transparency of ethnographic film and criticised the naivete with which various audiences interpret these productions, taking them as direct reflections of the objective reality. He pointed out that ethnographic films – through the use of common montage techniques – are conventional “constructed texts” (Banks, 1988, p. 2). MacDougall (2012, p. 6) suggested a distinction between anthropological films and “raw anthropological film footage”, with the former relying heavily on cinematic convention and influenced by various shooting and editing techniques and therefore constituting a created rather than “objective” reflection of reality. Indeed, videography (Knoblauch et al., 2014) – gathering raw footage as much as raw pictures collected in photo surveys – differs in the levels of construction from the creative forms of ethnographic movies and photographic exhibitions and collages based on data collected in research. But they, as any visual and traditional method of data collection and presentation, are not fully free from the influences of the researcher-creator either.

The discussion on the realism of film and photography prompted another one – the recognition of photography and film as art. Theorists have attempted to define the unique character of photography within the artistic field by analysing the ontological nuances of the images and trying to establish the relationship between the casual and representational character of photographic images. In his seminal work *Camera Lucida*, Barthes (1980) differentiated between two characteristics of photographs: *studium* and *punctum*. *Studium* refers to the overall context of the image, which makes it valuable as a historical or political evidence. It incorporates interest, inquisitiveness, devotion to a certain thing, and tendency. *Punctum* in turn “rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me” (Barthes, 1980, p. 26). Barthes here relates to the details of the image that attract attention and touch us. *Studium* is something we have to reach ourselves – either by reading the caption or by conducting the work of situating the image in its actual context. It is part of the culture within which the image is interpreted. *Punctum* is “that accident that pricks me” (Barthes, 1980, p. 26), moving, touching the heart. If not, the image is simply deprived of *punctum*. *Studium* is therefore the context, the reality, while *punctum* reveals the artistic characteristics of photography. Some scholars see the *punctum* as the core of the image, providing it with magic and power, and not requiring contextualisation (Baudrillard, 1999). This stance, while legitimate within the field of art, is difficult to accept in the research context. Here lies, in our view, the core difference between the use of images in these two interconnected, yet non-overlapping fields: art and science. *Studium* – the context – that scholars such as Baudrillard would willingly omit in their artistic approaches to the images lies at the core of visual methodologies (Becker, 1998).

Similar discussions as the ones accompanying the birth of photography were associated with the development of film. Classical film theory was from the very beginning concerned with whether the film could have been classified as an art. “Its roots in scientific experiments and its mechanical means of recording seemed to rule

out any role for individual expression or for created form, which argued against its artistic status” (Gaut, 2010, p. 3). Rudolf Arnheim was among the first film theorists who recognised and advocated for film as an artistic form (Gaut, 2010, p. 4). The quest for recognition of film as art had an important implication: the need to identify the author behind any artistic creation (Gaut, 2010, p. 4). Western understanding of artistic creation required that out of the different functions in film production, one – the director – should be identified as the creator of the final outcome. The discussion around film as an artistic form is still ongoing today. The main argument against the recognition of film as art is that the film is casual and that it reproduces reality – and for this reason its capacities as art are limited. Jay Ruby (2000) has argued that ethnographic film forms a different category from documentary for instance, because of its very scientific intention. Nevertheless, many current film theorists and philosophers have recognised film as an artistic form (Gaut, 2002, p. 310). The question that is relevant here in light of the goals of this volume is under which circumstances the film can become part of visual methodologies and if there is room for art. Verstappen (this volume) discusses equalising of the roles of film creators in ethnographic film at the cost of single author autonomy, pointing out that this practice, standing clearly against the documentary school, works well for the production of theory through the ethnographic film. Piemontese as well as Trencsényi and Naumescu (this volume) propose ways to co-create moving images with the participants. They show the extent to which the final product differs from the primary expectations of a researcher entering the field. Going beyond hierarchisation and involving research participants into co-creation of films take back the authorship from the director and places it somewhere in between the researchers, participants, and the medium with its transformative potential. This may seem a step back from the path to recognise the film as an artistic expression described by Gaut (2010), but we foresee it as a necessary step towards recognising the film as part of visual methodologies. The creation of film in visual methodologies is supposed to support the research enquiry, with filmmaking being a means to obtain knowledge, rather than a goal in itself.

From the discussion above stems a picture of visual methods as oriented towards obtaining data through images, rather than creating an expression of collected data in the form of a final product (such as a movie or a photo exhibition). What is then the role of aesthetics in the context of research practice? Do still and moving images produced in the research process require to appeal to the audience? Should a visual researcher possess the skills of a professional photographer or a movie maker? The short answer to these questions is no. The images and footage obtained as sources of data do not have to be aesthetically appealing. What is important is their correspondence with the research objectives – namely, they should depict issues meaningful for the goals of investigation, providing the researcher with a possibly wide context in which she can situate obtained findings. Nevertheless, if it comes to the display of still and moving images as a way to convey the findings of the research, appealing aesthetics, as well as the presence of the punctum, may bring benefits in relation to the extent of the research impact. Depending on the purposes of the projects, therefore, researchers hire professionals to accompany them in visual data

collection, and this is a well-established practice (see Ball, 2014). The final outcomes of the research projects, such as movies, photo exhibitions, visual essays etc. come together with the adoption of a visual methodology to the research on the earlier stages of the (co)production, as contributors to this volume successfully presented (Desille; Verstappen, MacQuarie, Chaps. 4, 6 and 16, in this volume). Because of the precautions on each and every stage of their making, these final outcomes do not represent a mere summary or illustration of the findings, but rather reflect the research process in a more broad perspective, conveying empirical and theoretical messages obtained through rigorous academic investigation. Their aesthetic values do not obscure the research message they are attempting to convey, and this is the latter that determines the former. These final stand-alone products may and do possess aesthetics values, incorporating both realistic and artistic characteristics and going beyond the polarised debates positioning art and science as opposed to one another. Sebag and Durand (Chap. 9, in this volume) advocate for a well-thought framing of ethnographic images, while fostering “uncertainty, surprise and, if possible, suspense” so as to “increase the attractiveness of the photo for the readers and lead them to look at it and to deepen its meaning.” As MacDougall (2012, p. 5) eloquently pointed out in relation to the anthropological film: “Art and science therefore need not be opposed if the art is in the service of more accurate description. Each filmmaker must decide at what point the means of expression employed begin to obscure rather than clarify the subject—in short, at what point aesthetic choices begin to undermine the creation of new knowledge”.

1.1.2 Context, Manipulation, and Positionality – Towards the “Objectivity” of Visual Research

Omitting the context of images depicting sensitive issues – such as the ones produced on migration – and thereby leaving the audience to its own interpretation may prove harmful for research participants (Becker, 1995, 1998; MacDougall, 2012). In the case of international migrations, it may even trigger anti-immigration attitudes (Desille, Buhr, & Nikielska-Sekula, 2019). Aligned with MacDougall’s (2012, p. 15) idea of reflexivity, we argue that the context is crucial if we are to convey any trustworthy research findings through images. Ways to contextualise may differ depending on the use of images (data collection or data dissemination), and across various media (sometimes requiring verbal or written addition to the images).

We appeal for the support of desk research and more traditional methods, in order to cross visual methods with other methods. As a matter of fact, the validation of research data is inherent to fieldwork (see Olivier de Sardan (1995) on the politics of fieldwork). In this volume, visual projects presented are usually embedded in a broader research project. Additionally, this is a reason why we have argued for a visual “methodology” rather than “method”. As Pauwels (2010) suggests, several theoretical frameworks can support visual analysis, including semiotics, several

sociological paradigms, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, postcolonial theory or feminist theory. We call for carefully structured research, from data collection planning to theoretical support and dissemination – and by structured, we by no means mean successful, and embrace failures and experiments. Evidently, as we reminded earlier, art and science do not have to exclude one another (MacDougall, 2012). Without positioning the context in opposition to the aesthetic values of research outcomes, we trust that stories told with visuals should have the same degree of scientificity as publications. For instance, Verstappen (Chap. 6, in this volume) advocates for writing parallel to editing. But their film *Living like a Common Man* works as a standalone project because of the long-term research on which its making was conditioned.

This exercise of contextualisation is, in our opinion, crucial because each scientific production entails (or at least wishes for) a reception by an audience. These audiences bring their own cultural resources (Rose, 2007) and experience particular scopic regimes (Metz, 1977), both defining their visual experiences (Ball & Gilligan, 2010). Context then can be prone to manipulation. It can be formulated in order to support interest of the subjects employing images to convey a particular message. The context is therefore not transparent either and cannot provide for the transparency of visuals. This was evident in the narrations of the so-called 2015 migration crisis. Traditional and social media both circulated pictures and short documentary-like movies showcasing (usually male) migrants in boats heading towards European shores. These images supported the argument that they were predators invading Europe, instead of victims of broken social, political, and economic systems in their countries of origin. On a different tone, humanitarian narratives have provided pictures of migrant and refugee children and women in misery, stripped of agency, often as a way to attract potential donations. Even documentaries, supposedly against mainstream media, have constructed a “generic migrant figure” (Trencsényi & Naumescu, Chap. 7, in this volume). In all mentioned cases, the urge to believe in the real existence of the subjects depicted by the images, along with the commentaries suggesting the way to interpret them, made for the great power of images. Therefore, visual messages, especially in the era of visual communication, in which information compacted in photographs, short movies, and infographics are received quickly, should be carefully structured to avoid misinterpretations leading to the harm of the concerned. It is equally important in both everyday life and in research practice. Within a visual landscape which is dominated by images of immigration that are either miserabilist, or criminalising, scholars might be careful of what new elements they bring to the existing knowledge of the audience.

When we collect and produce visuals, comes the question of what to display. We propose to set the highest standards by choosing what to display (Nikielska-Sekula, Chap. 2, in this volume), according to the best interests of the participants to the research, researched community, and the whole (social, professional, ethnic, etc.) group the participants are identified with. Within this context, visual methodologies raise questions not only about the mode of representation, but about representation itself. Against their initial aim, images can sometimes reinforce vulnerability, for instance by portraying poverty (MacQuarie, Chap. 16, in this volume). How one

makes sure not to participate in that? Trencsényi and Naumescu (Chap. 7, in this volume) propose taking images that, from the beginning, would not participate in the reproduction of “the generic migrant”. But the collection of chapters in this volume shows the heterogeneity of ethical choices, an issue Frers (Chap. 5, in this volume) proposes to frame as “ethics in motion”.

Following from the previously introduced statements of Becker (1979, 1995, 1998) on the truth and the falsehood as simultaneously immanent to photography, Banks’s (1988) non-transparency of ethnographic films, MacDougall’s (2012) reflexivity and Manovich’s (1995) constructed character of films, we draw the conclusion that still and moving images are dependent on the positionality of the researcher. Jenks (1995) reminds us that for a long time, “the idea of observation within the tradition of social theory implied a studied passivity and disengagement”. The “gaze of the voyeur” or the metaphor of the “fly on the wall” were commonplace. However, with the cultural, humanistic and critical turns in the 1980s, there is a broader consensus that “we transform what we see” (ibid), and a call for scholars to reflect on their position. As Jenks (1995, p. 11) argues, “it is possible to forge a conscious recognition of the constructive relation between our visual practices and our visual culture”. This, he says, does not necessarily mean that we need to go down to the singular: “Semiotics cannot proceed on the basis that signs mean different things to different people; on the contrary it depends on a cultural network that establishes the uniformity of responses to/readings of the sign”. Yet, it seems that indeed, “ethics are negotiated relationally in all of the different stages of a research process and this is certainly also true for visual approaches” (Frers, Chap. 5, in this volume).

It is fair to assume that, for Jenks and others, this cultural network is understood by as Western, white, male scholars studying migration. Even though many migration scholars have themselves experienced migrations (see Prieto-Blanco, Chap. 18, in this volume), issues of power imbalance, mobility privileges, preconceptions that we project on fieldwork and findings are crosscutting. As we have argued earlier, the adoption of a visual methodology, even if it holds the same pitfalls as traditional methodologies, can push us to reestablish some balance in the relationships (without being too naive!). To counter the “male gaze”, the “colonial gaze” (Edwards, 1992, 1997) and other forms of social control, we present visual methodologies as a tool to restore agency and power for participants, notably for immigrants, for women (Pereira, Maiztegui-Oñate, & Mata-Codesal, 2016; Weber, 2019), and for youth (Allen, 2008; Buckingham & De Block, 2007). Visual methods are often portrayed as ways to democratize research. Participants to the research regain power on issues that concern them, and the way they are portrayed. Nevertheless, this is not an automatic result of the mobilisation of visual methods. When collecting data, the mere presence and positionality of the researcher are sources of unbalance of power. Research on youth (such as Piemontese in this volume), whereas it highlights the importance of looking at children as social actors in their own right, must acknowledge that data collection occurs in adult-regulated spaces of encounters (Allen, 2008).

Some researchers point out that the degree of participation in research is contextual (see Nikielska-Sekula, Chap. 2, in this volume), and recruiting volunteers (especially in over-researched contexts) may prove challenging. If this is a case, the

researchers often benefit from the help of “privileged” participants”. These “access providers”, however, influence the data collection with their own unique positionality too. This presents risks to research, including clique effects or manipulation (Jérôme, 2008; Olivier de Sardan, 1995). In this context, the collection of chapters in this volume particularly emphasises the positionality of the researcher, as she involves persons who have experienced migration, and are often seen as vulnerable. The ethics committees put in place in many research institutions are far from being invincible safeguards. Ethics committee reviews can become constraints for researchers involved with populations considered at risk (Allen, 2008). They raise the question of who is protected: The funding institution? Or the participants? As Fox (2013, p. 987) claims when it comes to youth: “Ethical guidelines do not always reflect theoretical understandings of young people as competent expert social actors”. And this can be extended to many other groups in society.

The last question prompted here regards objectivity. Because of the interdependence of researcher’s positionality, are visual methods “less objective” than any other methods employed in social research? Do traditional methods give us better chances to reduce researchers’ influence on the data? The positionality of the researcher as actively influencing the field has been widely acknowledged by researchers in the last decades. Some of them have proposed problematising the way the unique positionality of the researcher might have affected the research in a structured manner and as an immanent part of the research process (Clarke, 2005). Many visual productions also problematise it by involving the filmmaker into the footage and introducing with this her own subjectivity. We, therefore, lean towards the claim that visual data are neither better, nor worse than traditional data in this regard. The costs of the proximity to the field, that allows uncovering the deep meanings, regardless of the methods, refer to the influence of the researcher on the field by her mere presence, appearance, the way of talking, moving and interacting. Visual data, therefore, poses no less value in relation to traditional methods with regard to “objectivity”, and their use should suit the research goals, and can be supplemented by other methods, as proposed by the concept of triangulation of methods.

1.2 Conveying Sensorial Experiences in the Field of International Migrations

In this section, we advance three arguments: the field of international migrations is, in itself, a visual culture shaped by relations of power; this visual culture is not solely “visual” but invokes other senses; the researcher is not the only one who experience through her senses, but participants and the audiences do too. Pink has related the premise stating that “ethnography is a reflexive and experiential process through which understanding, knowing and (academic) knowledge are produced” (2009, p. 8) with a visual methodology. She argues that the ethnographer’s sensing

body is placed in the multisensoriality of any social encounter or interaction. Not only that the ethnographer senses (and not only sees), but by recognising her embodied knowing, she will have to engage in a process of reflexivity. While Edwards (2012) argues that feminist visual anthropology is a critique of male domination, Ferrarini (2017) argues that the sensory turn's starting point is a critique of the emphasis of Western culture on vision as a privileged modality for knowing. He therefore claims to "paying attention to modes of experience that are less linguistic, symbolic and semiotic than they are sensory, embodied or "beyond text" (2017, p.3). This is even more crucial when participants to the research (often including the ethnographer herself, as Macquarie and Prieto-Blanco (this volume) reflect on) experienced migration. Unsettling common definitions of integration through the senses is a necessary provocation.

1.2.1 International Migrations as a Visual Culture

This publication project stemmed from a specific field of study, that of international migrations. We argued before that the adoption of a visual methodology within this field has implications. As a matter of fact, we associate certain images with migrations. As Rose (2001) reminds us, the term "visual culture" was first used by Svetlana Alpers (1983) regarding the importance of visual images to seventeenth century Dutch society. We entitled our first workshop – out of three workshops that eventually led to this volume – "What images of the world in a world of images?". Isn't the field of international migration a "visual culture": the study of variegated, complex, fragmented ways of life that has been the last decades eminently visual? A visual culture is a "cultural network that establishes the uniformity of responses to/readings the sign" (Jenks, 1995, p. 15). This leads us to acknowledge that we now produce a book embedded in a Euro-centred representational system (affecting how we know, how we interpret) (Banks & Morphy, 1999; Rose, 2001).

Second of all, by acknowledging that international migrations constitute a visual culture, we have to unpack its relation to power, to a specific "gaze" and to social control. In his volume *Society of Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord defines spectacle as a social relation between people, mediated by images. It's an economic ideology that legitimates one unique vision of life, which is imposed upon us via audio-visual, bureaucratic, political and economic manifestations, so as to ensure the reproduction of power and alienation. Debord's spectacle has been recuperated within the field of international migrations. The most well-known is Nicholas De Genova account of the "Border Spectacle" which "fashions the border as a veritable mise-en-scène of the larger dramaturgy of migration as a site of transgression and the reaction formations of law enforcement" (2013, p. 1185).

Contributions included in this collection address a wide range of issues related to international migrations. Image culture is an arena of diverse and often conflicting ideologies (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Oftentimes, scholars attempt to produce visuals that defy the dominant mainstream ideology. The case studies brought

forward by Magazzini (Chap. 15, in this volume) show possible breakaways designed by minorities themselves, with the cooperation of scholars. Similarly, MacQuarie (Chap. 16, in this volume) proposes a “nightworkshop methodology” to counter narratives of invisibilisation of night workers with a migration experience.

1.2.2 *Beyond the Visual*

After we started bringing together the different contributions that now form this volume, we realised that it was crucial to go beyond the visual and overcome “visual essentialism” (Bal, 2003). As a matter of fact, we were taught that sight is objective, while what is tactile, acoustic is considered subjective. Kelvin Low (2012) reminds us that visual sense has been at the top of the hierarchy of senses since Aristotle (at least in the Western world). However, he suggests that “A related and equally pertinent point concerns how isolating one sense for analysis may lead to a neglect of how the senses work together, hence exhibiting sensory bias and muting multi-sensory experiences” (2012, p. 273). As Taylor has argued in *Visualising Theory* (1994), visual anthropology is linked to experience and cognition. He refers to MacDougall for whom ethnographic films “provoke new knowledge through the circumstances of their making” (1994, p. XIII); and to Annette Weiner for whom “ethnographic films should themselves “embody”–enact, so to speak, rather than simply report on –cultural encounters, by urging anthropologists to transcend the hoary old binarism between us and them, and its corollary of an unidirectional oppositional gaze” (Taylor, 1994, p. XIII).

How then can we transcend the visual? We follow claims by scholars who have suggested that while seeing, reading, listening, touching, smelling we invoke all senses, not just the one traditionally associated with the activity. They have used a diverse lexicon, including: Howe’s (1991) sensory experience, and intersensoriality (Howes, 2005); Tuan’s (1993) multisensoriality; Taylor’s (1994) “visual-sensual”; Rodaway’s (1994) sensuous geographies; Ingold’s (2000) anthropology of the senses; and Pink’s (2009) sensory ethnography. It is argued that a sensuous scholarship starts with Stoller’s work on the Songhay of Niger (Bonfanti, Massa, & Miranda Nieto, 2019). It gains importance with several seminal works, including Merleau-Ponty’s *Eye and Mind* (1961). Merleau-Ponty develops his concept of perception and argues: “It is, rather, a space reckoned starting from me as the zero point or degree zero of spatiality. I do not see it according to its exterior envelope; I live in it from the inside; I am immersed in it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961, p. 178). Merleau-Ponty has in common with Gibson’s *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979) the links between subject and object, seeing and seen. This is developed further by ethnographic filmmakers such as Steven Feld and Jean Rouch, whose “specific technologies and recording techniques [...] evoke embodied and sensory experience” (Ferrari, 2017). Similarly, in *The Corporeal Image*, MacDougall’s “recordings preserve important deictic characteristics, for they are testimonies of moments of the author’s seeing and listening – they carry the mark of the author’s body in

their own being” (2005, p. 54). Based on these various accounts, Pink (2009) suggests that the ethnographer’s sensing body is a source of knowledge. Reflexivity enables embodied knowing (Pink, 2009). Why? Because of the corporeality and multisensoriality of any social encounter or interaction (ibid). In a later article (Pink, 2010), she reasserts that sensory anthropology is interdisciplinary; anchored in perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1961) and experience; and requires embodied practice and movement (Ingold, 2000).

Hence, vision does not dominate the way we experience. We must recognise the relationship between vision and other senses. Bal (2003, p. 9) considers that all senses are permeable: “The act of looking is profoundly “impure”. [...] looking is inherently framed, framing, interpreting, affect-laden, cognitive and intellectual. Second, this impure quality is also likely to be applicable to other sense-based activities: listening, reading, tasting, smelling. This impurity makes such activities mutually permeable, so that listening and reading can also have visuality to them”. For her, visuality is impure, immaterial, eventful. Similarly, Ferrarini proposes to “paying attention to modes of experience that are less linguistic, symbolic and semiotic than they are sensory, embodied or “beyond text” (Cox, Irving, & Wright, 2016)” (2017, p. 3). Pink (2009) refers to “Ingold [who] has proposed a refocusing of research in the anthropology of the senses, away from “the collective sensory consciousness of society” and towards the “creative interweaving of experience in discourse and to the ways in which the resulting discursive constructions in turn affect people’s perceptions of the world around them” (2000, p. 285)”.

Chapters included in this collection extensively address the relation between the sensory body, experience and the adoption of a visual methodology (see Nikielsa-Sekula, Desille; Krase and Shortell; Gnes, Chaps. 2, 4, 8 and 14, in this volume). Why is it particularly important in the field of international migrations? As we argue repetitively in this introduction, researchers involved with participants who have experienced migrations must be conscious of their position, including what they know and recognise as familiar and foreign. For instance, Low (2012) advocates for sensorial transnationalism. In fact “transnational sensescapes (Low & Kalekin-Fishman, 2010) implies an acknowledgement of the importance of sensory memory; how one responds to sensory use in a different cultural context resulting from short/long-term migration is contingent upon one’s situated sensory paradigm at “home” (2012, p. 279). Smell in a context of international migration, for instance has evocative qualities that associate them with past and present experiences in meaningful ways but can also lead to forms of discrimination, xenophobia and racism (Bonfanti et al., 2019).

1.2.3 Reaching Out

Invoking the senses happens at different times of the image production process. Through embodiment, it occurs during data collection. But the senses are also invoked when showcasing a visual research output. As Rose (2001) argues, there are different “sites”: the production, the image itself, and the audience.

If we were to base our analysis on secondary research uses and respondent-generated material (Pauwels, 2010), an intermediate step is needed in the research project. In fact, it means that we are sensing through the others' senses. Participatory schemes can change the point of view. It may fulfill the ambition of a "study of people's own visual worlds" (Banks & Morphy, 1999, p. 13). Mostly, it enables feedback (Pauwels, 2010) through visual inter-viewing and photo-elicitation. As we have stated in the introduction, the content of the image is not the sole dimension. Edwards (2012) presents an "idea of a sensory photograph, entangled with orality, tactility, and haptic engagement. [...] photographs cannot be understood through visual content alone but through an embodied engagement with an affective object world, which is both constitutive of and constituted through social relations" (2012, p. 221). She concludes: "All these processes render photographs profoundly social objects of agency that cannot be understood outside the social conditions of the material existence of their social function—the work that they do."

Researcher-initiated production of visual data or respondent-generated material can also be exposed to a larger audience. The time of screening, showing, exhibiting, and the new choices we have through digital media are both crucial in reception. Scenography plays a big role in the reception. But even if the images are just transmitted without scenography and order, Bal says that images get "scars" with time (2003). Edwards and Hart (2004) look at photographs as objects which material and physical value holds meaning. People will experience the images differently if on screen, printed, in an album, an exhibition. Similarly, when it comes to films, MacDougall and Taylor (1998) proposes to explore possibilities for viewers to "experience" too.

What about not showing? Verstappen (this volume) has argued that scene selection is a crucial moment: a final product does not necessarily need to include all the footage and can in fact leave aside elements to strengthen the narrative clarity of a film. Nikielska-Sekula (this volume) has herself argued that, if the participants are at risk, it is better to abstain from publishing any data. Researchers ought to reflect on the potential harm of their visual outcomes and negotiate their position. If textual accounts make it easier to respect the anonymity of participants, visuals make people visible, sometimes against their protection (Gnes, Chap. 14, in this volume). A possible strategy is to avoid faces, but then, how can one tell a story without people (Nikielska-Sekula, Chap. 2, in this volume)? What do places mean when the shot was taken once the space is vacated? In this context, many argue for the use of visual methods, not as a standalone, but in a more encompassing methodology. As we have just said, the role of photo elicitation, but also of the montage and editing process are crucial. Aside from a visual production, written accounts on ethical choices can be enlightening for further projects, as well as for other researchers engaged in visual methodologies in migration studies. Battaglia argues "the absence of something (its invisibility) can be as crucial to processes of interpretation as the presence of something" (cited in Banks & Morphy, 1999). Visual representations affect the unseen, the unseeable, emotions, feelings of identity and separation (ibid).

During the workshops we had organised before the edition of this volume, Prieto-Blanco (Chap. 18, in this volume) coined the notion of “right to disappear”, to inform the duration of consent given by a participant to the study or in other words her right to withdraw this consent after the data were published. The “right to disappear” is even more at risk when visuals are involved. Having this concept in mind, let us now come back to the difference between art and research-related visuals, as made in the initial section of this introduction. As a matter of fact, visual art would provide that the meaning of the picture might change over time, while its value as art remains.

1.3 Places and Bodies, Storytelling, Participation, and Representation

To which extent does the adoption of a visual methodology in migration studies provide scholars with a new way to access and produce knowledge? First and foremost, we argue that visuals have an epistemological value. In other terms, the production of visuals, may it be by researchers or by participants to a project, enables accessing and then producing knowledge. In the words of Ball and Gilligan, a visual methodology encompasses “the theories and concepts, methods and technologies utilised in researching “the visual”” (Ball & Gilligan, 2010). We argued in the previous section that the visuals in research were of comparative value as words, reflecting a range of individual and collective experiences, practices and discourses. We also argued that the contextualisation of these texts, including the subjectivity introduced by the ones capturing the still or moving images, was essential. Based on this assumption, the visual methodology we propose to follow is critical, and acknowledge the superposition of multiple truths, understood through a variety of “ways of seeing”, defined by Berger to refer to the fact that “we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves (1972, p. 9)”.

In what follows, we elaborate on the four dimensions which support the epistemological value of visuals, namely: places and bodies, storytelling, participation, and representation. These dimensions correspond to the four sections of the volume.

1.3.1 Places and Bodies

Perhaps because of their crucial contribution to the reinvigoration of the visual, humanistic and cultural, scholars have given a prominent positions to places, identities and everyday lives in visual data collection. These considerations have lived on, and many recognise that the world is built on human decisions, and these shape social processes, which in turn transform the places humans live in. With this in mind, contrarily to audio recordings, visual methods enable a “sensorial” ethnography, revealing embodied experiences, gestures, emotions and other non-oral data on the one

hand; and material data on specific places² on the other hand. The use of visual methods supports the unique character of a place, by emphasising the particularity of its physical appearance, its rhythm and colours, its ambiance in general. As Krase (2012) has argued, a visual approach to the study of ordinary streetscapes enables the researcher to document and then analyse how the built environment reflects the changing cultural and class identities of a neighbourhood's residents. Evidently, one same place can be viewed, and hence shown, distinctively depending on the individual. The mental maps of many different versions of Lisbon, as collected by Buhr (in this volume), are a case in point. Similarly, Nikielska-Sekula (Chap. 2, in this volume) argues that what draws our eye depends on our familiarity with the place.

An additional focus we make here, is the ability to show the triviality of the everyday. The adoption of a visual methodology sustains the objective of portraying places and material experiences located outside of "spectacular" events, of official discourses, or of romanticised narratives (Raulin et al., 2016; Weber, 2019). Desille (Chap. 4, in this volume) takes advantage of this to portray a local politician in northern Israel. As Rose (2001) argues, there are other ways of visualising the world, that are not tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy. As such, the camera or the pen can lead the participants to reveal the intimacy of the places they inhabit and use. Moreover, capturing images outside of public and decent places (Allen, 2008) enables us to counter submissive discourses. The contrary may be true too: visual methods might provide ways to restore everyday experiences, and increase visibility in the public space (Pereira et al., 2016). Gnes's work (Chap. 14, in this volume), done in parallel with a militant NGO in the USA, amplifies the visibility of daily workers playing music.

Beyond the visual recording of places, is that of bodies. Moving images more acutely permit to show not only words, but also movements, emotions, silence and more. Research participants can show what they do, where they walk and more, instead of describing their activities with words. But they can also choose to avoid leading the camera to certain places, divert and make the choice of not showing. This "absence" is hence as important to the scholar as the presence. As de Hasque has argued, visual methods can prove useful and necessary to collect field data, for instance, to record non-oral discourses of officials, when one distances himself from power-based conventional discourse, or in general, to grasp what is not expressed by words (de Hasque, 2014). Additionally, the relations between participants' bodies and the objects and constructions that surround them, can be recorded, and analysed later on (by researchers but also by the participants).

²The definition we retain of place follows revised accounts of Agnew's "sense of place" (1987), adapted to contemporary social changes. Agnew's three dimensions of place – a location, or a site in space; a series of locales where everyday life activities take place; and a "sense of place", i.e. the feeling of belonging to a unique community and a unique landscape – is extended as follows: "[...] we understand by place the experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however, unstable), sense of boundaries (however, permeable), and connection to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed, traversed by power, and never fixed" (Escobar, 2001, p. 140). Hence, a "progressive sense of place" (Massey, 1991) takes into account the uniqueness of place, as well as its relation to the outside.

Finally, the bodies of the researchers themselves are to be included in the theories that relate individuals with the time-space they inhabit. Both filmmakers Rouch (1978) and MacDougall (1995) have contributed to the conceptualisation of the relation between the one filming, the camera and the ones filmed. For Rouch, this relation leads to an incarnated, involved and participating experience (de Hasque, 2014). Without words needed, accepting the presence of a camera implies a relation of trust and reciprocity between the filming body and the filmed body (ibid). The mediation of the researcher's body and the camera is still contemporary. To this first time-space, created at the moment of filming, one can add the time-space of the projection (Rebollo, Ardévol, Orobítz Canal, & Vila Guevara, 2008), where another set of social interactions and reinterpretations occur with the audience.

The visual is mutually constitutive of what it captures: visuals permit showing places and bodies that inhabit them; but bodies and their movements, as well as the materialities of the place surrounding the scene captured inform the framing of the images (and, further, the materiality of the films and photographs themselves). As such, emphasising places and bodies when producing visuals on migration-related matters is far from trivial: it holds the potential to transform some views on migrants, that have reduced them to dislocated, almost floating bodies, neither here nor there. Visuals channel the multiple embodied experiences of migrants in places.

Contributors to the section present case studies from the three following cities: Drammen (Nikielska-Sekula), Lisbon (Buhr), and Kiryat Shmona (Desille). Nikielska-Sekula (Chap. 2, in this volume) addresses the implication of the use of photography for multi-sited ethnography in the context of Norwegian Turkish communities. She discusses the value of photography as triggering social relation, the sensory experience of the field, the positionality of the researcher, as well as the ethics, problematising the question of "what to display?". Buhr (Chap. 3, in this volume) analyses the use of mental maps during data collection, in a project aiming at unpacking spatial integration of immigrants in Lisbon. He shows that mental maps expose migrants' practical skills for navigating urban space and argues for an interactive approach to mental maps, in which drawings are to be understood within the researcher-participant engagement. The author uses the "hologram" metaphor to make his point – showing how looking only at mental maps' face-value falls short of the method's potentialities. Desille (Chap. 4, in this volume) provides a meta reflection grounded in empirical evidence on the process of documentary filming within the context of researching migrants. As the main character of the film discussed by her is associated with a nationalist and populist political party, the piece offers a reflection on the positionality of the researcher/filmmaker filming her character attempting to answer the questions of how to produce a film with a degree of fairness in this politically-loaded context? She also problematises the issues of distance and proximity created through the camera. The section is concluded by Frers (Chap. 5, in this volume), who coins the notion of "ethics in motion" to highlight the relations between ethical choices, relationality between researcher and participants, and places.

In line with the claim that visuals enable to ground research in places, and focus on the embodied experiences of persons who have experienced migration, is another related one, which aims at presenting the complexities of the persons that have

experienced migration. The following part thus focuses on the narratives researchers and participants elaborate on migrations, through visuals.

1.3.2 *Storytelling*

Data collection is only part of the research process. For it to be part of the production of knowledge, it needs to be translated in the form of presentations, classes, papers or books, and visuals – as we argue here –, that can be disseminated to a wider audience. Turning observations, maps, interviews, photographs or videos and more into a shareable text – may it be written or visual – is a labourious process, which implies crosscutting one’s findings with existing theories and concepts. It also implies that the researcher will tell a story, and build their argument using a certain degree of dramatisation. Even the most accepted format of a scientific article follows this dramatisation pattern: it usually starts with the contributions made previously in one’s field, then introduces a sense of rupture and the idea that an innovation has to be made, followed by a series of arguments, which apparent conflictuality with the opening section is solved in the conclusion.

Very similarly, most scholars who disseminate the visuals they or their participants have produced will adopt techniques of dramatisation to tell a story. As previously stated, Banks argues “that ethnographic films are also constructed texts, not direct representations of reality. Some filmmakers realise this and their films reflect it. Others do not and their films reflect their naivety” (1988, p. 2). However, Jean Pierre Olivier de Sardan has differentiated ethnographic films from other forms of documentary, arguing that ethnographers who produce films agree upon an “ethnographic pact” with their viewers. With the ethnographic pact, the viewer accepts the manipulations caused through montage and editing because she knows that the scientist will try to stick to the reality as much as possible. Additionally, the ethnographer will make realisation choices in a way that points towards science rather than fiction. Nevertheless, we believe that visuals can provide researchers with the necessary material to fulfill the ambition of adding complexities, layers and dimensions to the people who participate in the research. This has at least two limitations: firstly, that this would be planned beforehand – it is not an automatic result of the mobilisation of visual methods; secondly, one can never completely restore the historical person.

The process of storytelling involves the creation of a “character”. Even though our ambition should be to make these characters as complex as possible, it can never come close to the *real* person. Though distorted and fragmented, the portrayal of subjective experience is a core concern for social scientists mobilising visual methods. As MacDougall affirms, “Testimony is what gives us the subjective voice of the historical person, yet we are implicated in the destiny of others through narrative; and the mythic potential of social actors is heightened through the distancing created by exposition” (MacDougall & Taylor, 1998, p. 122). Following this quote, we

acknowledge that many possible truths can be collected. Collaboration with participants is a possible way to solve the distortions in the narratives that will circulate after the research project is completed. Piemontese (Chap. 10, in this volume) has directly handed the camera to his participants. Otherwise, collaborations with other professionals and researchers can help “control” for the coherence and depth of the story (see Desille, Chap. 4, in this volume; Verstappen, Chap. 6, in this volume). We will address this more in depth in what follows.

In sum, three levels of interpretation are involved from the production of images, the editing of a narrative, to the screening: that of the participants (what they want to tell), of the researcher (mediating knowledge), and of the audience. As we have already elaborated, after the researcher collects shots, footage, maps or more, the process of montage and editing is a process of storytelling which affects the reality. Here again, the involvement of the participants, although rarer, can provide a safeguard to ensure that various subjectivities are included. And at the time of exposition, multiple interpretations are possible. The same picture can be interpreted differently by different persons. Moreover, it can be interpreted differently by the same participant, depending on the audience. Finally, a sequence of similar images will affect the audience differently, from another sequence of the same images (in a different order for example).

Although this might seem like an ambitious claim, with only limited results, we argue that we must at least start to find solutions against the reduction of migration experiences to one generic migrant figure. As such, a visual methodology holds the potential to multiply and complexify accounts of migration.

The three empirical cases included in this section focus on genres such as film, photography, and visual essay as tools for storytelling. Verstappen (Chap. 6, in this volume) advocates for “theorizing-through-film”. Based on a film which she has co-filmed, her chapter shows the extent to which filming, montage, and editing can give access to a transnational social field from the perspective of people who move within it. She also discusses the benefits of collaborative filmmaking as an alternative way of theory formation. Trencsényi and Naumescu (Chap. 7, in this volume) analyse existing documentaries, shedding light on the process of making migrants into a one-dimensional “collective protagonist.” What is more, building on a course for migrants on filmmaking and the results of this course, they show how migrants present themselves through films, even if the filmmaker is involved and mediates the encounter between the migrant and medium and the emergence of a “third voice” from this participatory process. Finally, Krase and Shortell (Chap. 8, in this volume) explore the possibilities of storytelling through photographs presenting and discussing two examples of visual essays featuring neighbourhoods in New York and London. They argue that migrants exercise agency through changing the local places they occupy, and that photography helps to grasp visible markers of this change. Sebag and Durand (Chap 9, in this volume) conclude the section with a meta reflection on mediating stories through the visuals. They critically challenge the contributors to this section asking if seeing alone can provide a researcher insight into the life words of migrants.

1.3.3 *Participation*

By participation, we take the militant stance of scholars, who acknowledge that all can participate in producing knowledge. The participatory character of visual methods emphasises the agency of participants in a performative way: taking pictures, acting in front of the camera, drawing and sketching; but also during the analysis of collected materials, through interviews or focus groups where visuals produced are discussed and analysed. Participatory visual methodology implies that the researcher is not the only person analyzing the data.

Conferring researched individuals with choices over the object of research, participatory visual research methods can permit a more humanist representation of the participants' situations, as well as minimise harm. In fact, when working with refugees or IDPs for instance, researchers run the ethical risks of using participants as research data. By letting participants choose what they wish to talk about, they can decide if to reenact the type of experiences they have encountered – including trauma, poverty or insecurity – and how (Weber, 2019). As already mentioned, Piemontese (Chap. 10, in this volume) has given the camera to the youth he worked with. Trencsényi and Naumescu (Chap. 7, in this volume) have run a workshop with asylum seekers who participated in a collective filming exercise to depict their lives away from mainstream discourses in Hungary. But the simple fact of “following” a character (Desille, Gnes, Chaps. 4 and 14, in this volume) rather than imposing specific scenes is, as much as pose in photography (Ball, 2014), a way to confer agency.

In the particular field of international migration, this type of participatory processes has the potential to allow individuals to build an active relationship to citizenship, to confer agency upon them, and to allow them to overcome their post-political condition (Salzbrunn, Dellwo, & Besençon, 2018). This active participation is a form of “citizenship from below” (Pereira et al., 2016). Some accounts of visual methods emphasise the empowering character of this type of research. The lexicon of “pride” is recurrent in empirical research results. Le Houerou (2012) discusses the reactions of the participants to her research and affirms that they find themselves beautiful and proud to be on camera. Similarly, Weber speaks of the IDP women that took photographs during her research and says: “They seemed proud of the photos they took, showing them to interested family members and neighbours” (2019, p.11). The empowerment can stem from the recognition of the competency of participants in knowledge production.

Critical research such as feminist research reaffirms the need to produce knowledge useful for oppressed groups and seek the transformations of different forms of oppression (Weber, 2019). When thought of in the context of visual methodologies in international migration, common examples are those of transformative learning processes embedded in a “citizenship as practice” approach (Pereira et al., 2016; Weber, 2019). In that sense, researchers should not see themselves as “giving a voice” to their participants, but rather as facilitators (on the paternalistic problematic issue of voice giving to the voiceless, see Taylor (1994, p. XIV)). By creating

venues may they be events (Bacon, Desille & Pate, Chap. 12, in this volume) or museums (Magazzini, Chap. 15, in this volume), they can positively participate in *amplifying* a voice, that obviously, already exists. A question that remains is: Why would the researcher commit to this position of facilitator? In the following paragraphs, we assert that researchers have a role to play in the representations that circulate on international migration. Hence, the impact of their work is real and should be evaluated (see also Trencsényi & Naumescu, Chap. 7, in this volume).

The contributors to the section present issues on different levels, starting from a case study involving Roma youths (Piemontese, Chap. 10, in this volume), through a case study on undocumented migrants in Serbia (Augustová, Chap. 11, in this volume), to discussing a co-created artistic event (Bacon, Desille, and Pate, Chap. 12, in this volume). Based on his fieldwork among Roma youths in Spain and Romania, Piemontese offers a meta-reflection on the intersection of participatory and audiovisual methods in researching unprivileged youths. With a close reference to the fieldwork, the chapter describes the three phases of participatory research (training – participation – professionalisation), tackling among other things the issues of the competency of research participants to produce knowledge, relationship between the researcher and the participant and the consequences of employed technology for the findings. Piemontese advocates for a superiority of participatory methods over traditional ones in the research involving unprivileged youths. Augustová discusses the use of respondent generated visuals presenting a case study of migrants in Serbia in formal and informal camps attempting to cross to Croatia. She discusses the dilemmas around using researcher generated photography in the middle of a so-called migration crisis, where the trust given to visual researchers is severely limited by negative experiences of the actors with journalists. Finally, she presents the visualisation of the “game” – illegal border crossing –, as captured by the respondents. She presents a photovoice method which allowed respondents to choose what kind of information associated with traumas, and on which level of depth they wanted to share. Bacon, Pate, and Desille, by providing a meta reflection on a scientific event, discuss the encounter between art and migration scholarship. They attempt to answer the question: how the meeting with migration studies and art is conceived as a political act, where citizenship is experimented. They ultimately show the dilemma between visibility, and actual presence and participation of migrants in these events. The section is concluded by Cantat (Chap. 13, in this volume). She suggests that participation is the result of a “politics of encounters”, which in turn leads to different “products” for dissemination. However, participation’s ultimate goal is indeed to redistribute (more equally) the roles between scholars, artists, participants etc.

With participation, can researchers hold the promise of transformation? With new regulations in funding, many researchers are obliged to provide an answer to how the research will transform people’s lives. We must check the box of “measuring social impact” (see Magazzini, Chap. 15, in this volume). If researchers are entitled to be optimistic, this cannot be limited to an exercise of “checking the boxes” to get access to funding. A reflection on what is realistic is crucial. For instance, if visual methods can provide new means for participants to advocate,

professionalise and participate, it is essential that the research project includes time to highlight key findings and recommendations, and accompaniment of participants in a longer term process (Weber, 2019).

1.3.4 Representations

Visual methods hold yet another key feature, important in critical studies: scientific production can be restituted to a larger audience than the restricted scientific community. Through exhibitions, online photo galleries, projection, streaming, publication in open access media or web-based documentaries and much more, the possibilities for exposure are endless – maybe so much that they require the deep ethical reflections which we address in this volume. Because they are more accessible than textual scientific productions, they can be used as a tool for elicitation, through focus groups, or when visuals are brought to third parties, as a tool to transform, when shared with stakeholders and policymakers.

The wider accessibility of visuals leads us to the question of representation. Representation can be broadly defined as “the use of language and images to create meaning about the world around us” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Representation occurs through systems of representation such as language and visual media (and the rules and convention organising them) (ibid). We all construct meaning of the material world through these systems (ibid). Visual systems can include the processes that result in humans producing visible objects, reflexively constructing their visual environment and communicating by visual means (Banks & Morphy, 1999). Visual methodology itself is embedded in representational systems, including political interests, particular systems of knowledge, affecting what is known and how it is interpreted (ibid). Although Mead and Bateson worked restlessly to make visual anthropology a legitimate mode of representation, Banks and Morphy (1999) argue that they have failed to make visual anthropology a study of people’s own visual worlds, including the role of representations within cultural processes. As Pink (2001) suggests, the purpose of visual ethnography is to explore the relationship between the visual and other knowledge, in order to make meaningful links between different research experiences and materials; and to uncover sets of different representations. Banks and Morphy (1999) affirm that the bases of representational systems vary cross-culturally both in terms of what is selected out for representation and how those features are represented or encoded (Coote & Shelton, 1992). The objective of a visual methodology is to reveal these different “ways of seeing” (Berger, 1972, p. 9) within and between societies.

When it comes to international migrations, the visual has been a crucial political instrument. As we have presented earlier, De Genova (2013) relied on Debord’s spectacle when coining the “Border Spectacle”, which visually translates into the “iconic border” between the USA and Mexico, “increasing prominence of images of the patrols of the high seas or rugged landscapes”, and a “choreography of images” to produce the “illegality” of migrants. He argues: “In this respect, we may

infer from Debord (1967, p. 19, original emphasis) that state power itself has come to rely, both intensively and extensively, on the instantaneous propagation of mass-mediated public discourse and images, which is “essentially one-way” (2013, p. 1189).

As we have argued at the beginning of this introduction, most notably through the work of Barthes (1980), photographic truth is a myth, and that the only acts of selection, framing and personalisation reflect subjective choice. Those choices should therefore be informed. Scholars have a responsibility to counter discourses on migration that are harmful to persons who have experienced migration. Processes of dehumanisation, criminalisation and securitisation observed in Europe and beyond today have heavily relied on spectacular images. In this context, we should be careful not to produce visuals that can be instrumentalised for these ends. Relying on archival works can prove useful to document historical migrations (such as the work of Morena La Barba (2014), or that of Erika Thomas described in Bacon, Desille & Pate this volume), produce comparative works, and in general, take a step back.

In this final section, the authors present case studies of undocumented migrants in Los Angeles (Gnes), institutions focusing on the representation of migrants and minorities (Magazzini) and a cinematic depiction of migration (MacQuarie). Gnes (Chap. 14, in this volume) looks at the work of an immigrant organisation based in Los Angeles County. Through music performances, the organisation reaches out to day labourers who immigrated from central and south America; organises protests in symbolic places; and raises awareness to a wider public (including with the collaboration of well-known artists). The author provides a step by step analysis of the research process involving interviews, participant observations and film to obtain the data, along with a critical reflection on accompanying ethical questions. Both researcher-, and respondent-generated images and sounds are involved into the data repository. The chapter is an account on the function of music to gather people around specific issues and mobilise them towards political action. Magazzini (Chap. 15, in this volume) looks at three case studies: EAC (The Expatriate Archive Centre), the ERIAC (The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture) and “Bunkers”, a documentary by Anne-Claire Adet, to present ways of challenging popular representations of migrants and minorities in a broadly understood cultural discourse. She discusses the premises of representation focusing on what is represented, by whom, and for which audience, proving that the representations modes are not causal in the chosen case studies, but selected on purpose to counter current common discourses on minorities, and to evoke empathy. MacQuarie’s chapter (Chap. 16, in this volume) features the film trilogy (*invisible lives*, *nocturnal lives* and *nightshift spitalfields*) as bringing front three methods of cooperation: with a filmmaker; researcher-generated footage (and film-to-theory); and cooperation with a participant to the research. He also discusses the phenomenon of an embodied knowledge as means of representation of migrant bodily experiences that is possible to be reached (and described) by the anthropologist through a longitudinal immersion in the field, in his case the nocturnal migrant workers working place, within the framework of a participant observation. The section

concludes with Şanlıer Yüksel and Çam's chapter (Chap. 17, in this volume) on representation, position of the researcher and ethics.

1.4 Before We Move onto the Next Parts

Before we move onto the next parts, we want to reiterate the four claims that we have made so far. Firstly, visuals enable researchers to ground research in places, and focus on the embodied experiences of persons who have experienced migration. In that sense, it counters the preconception that migrants are neither here nor there. Secondly, visuals tell stories. Against the reduction of migration experiences to one generic migrant figure, they hold the potential of multiplying and complexifying accounts of migration. Thirdly, the adoption of a visual methodology increases the possibilities for cooperation and co-authorship, and therefore the need to recognise the competency of participants in knowledge production. Finally, these three claims all feed in the transformation of representations of people who have experienced migration. Researchers are responsible for these representations as much as other media they often criticise. As such, and this has been made clear in the second section of this introduction, they have to regularly question: the power imbalance between them and the participants to the research; their positionality and the subjective character of their interpretations; and matters of ethics when carrying out research on migration.

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Part I
Places and Bodies

Chapter 2

“Have You Just Taken a Picture of Me?”: Theoretical and Ethical Implications of the Use of Researcher-Produced Photography in Studying Migrant Minorities



Karolina Nikielska-Sekula

2.1 Introduction

In recent years, the field of migration studies has witnessed a growing interest in the employment of photography. This is however not a new phenomenon in this area of study. Amateur photographer Augustus Sherman, who was photographing people arriving at Ellis Island (US) in the late 1800s and early 1900s, started documenting the lives of migrants using photography already over a century ago. This trend was developed in a more similar form to what we understand as visual research practice today in Berger and Mohr’s classical book *A Seventh Man: Migrant Workers in Europe* (Becker, 2002; Berger & Mohr, 1975). Ethical issues around photographing migrants has also caused public debates, such as the one around Dorothea Lange’s depiction of “A migrant Mother” (Phelan, 2014). Nevertheless, while research employing visual methods in a context of migration have become gradually more popular, a meta-reflection on the use of visual methodology in this sensitive field has been very limited (Ball & Gilligan, 2010, § 44). This book aims to fill this gap, with this particular chapter focusing primarily on photography.

Building on Luc Pauwels’s (2009, p. 550–552) categorization of the origins of visual data, in relation to the process of its production and the issues of control arising around it, we may differentiate between “found”, “secondary and respondent-generated”, and “researcher-produced” visual imagery. “Found” are pre-existing materials, the production of which is beyond the control of the researcher. “Secondary and respondent-generated data” are those produced by other researchers in similar research contexts or by the respondents. Here the control of data production increases but is not fully owned by the researcher. Finally,

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“researcher-produced data” are those images generated by the researcher, over which, at least in theory, she exercises the greater amount of control. This chapter, as a primary reference point will focus on the use of researcher-produced photography. Pauwels (2009, p. 551–552), however, is reluctant to draw clear-cut lines between the sections of his categorization, proposing instead to see different visual imagery as elements of a continuum. Following from this, the discussion presented in this chapter, while focusing primarily on researcher-produced photography, and presenting theoretical and empirical challenges related to this particular method, may be, to a various extent, applied to other elements of the visual imagery continuum, going therefore beyond clear-cut categories between types of visual sources and techniques.

This chapter explores the use of researcher-produced photography in studying migrant communities. The discussion presented here is inspired by my research practice of employing photography, within a methodological framework of ethnographic observation, to investigate the way migrants and their descendants exercise transnational belonging in new and ancestral homelands. The main aim of the chapter is to critically assess the theoretical implications and ethical challenges arising with the application of this method in studying immigrant communities.

Researcher-produced photography is understood here as relating to the pictures collected by a researcher in the field in a process of a systematic data gathering within a solid methodological framework. It can be both a stand-alone method and an element of a more complex toolbox, which incorporates visual and so-called traditional methods (Gold, 2004; Martiniello & Boucher, 2017).

The organization of the chapter is as follows: I start with the introduction of methodology and context of my research on Norwegian Turks in Drammen that constitute the empirical reference for theoretical and ethical analyses introduced further. Then I move to the discussion around the ontological status of a photograph in a light of realist-conventionalist dilemma, showing how I solved that problem when interpreting and presenting visual data. Further, inspired by Gibson’s (1979) ecological approach to visual perception as well as Pink’s multisensorial approach to visual methodologies, I discuss the theoretical implications of a “place-based” character of photographs (Klett, 2012), the local context of visual data gathering, and the positionality of the researcher. In a final section, I focus closely on chosen ethical challenges I had to consider when employing photography during research on migrant minorities in a multi-sited setting.

2.2 Methodology and Research Context

The primary research behind the theoretical and ethical discussions presented in this chapter was conducted between 2013 and 2016 in Drammen, Norway, and in a number of villages in Konya province in Turkey. The aim of the research was to understand issues related to identity creation, belonging and the use of cultural heritage by people of Turkish origin settled in Drammen. As such, the research focused

on Norwegian-Turkish communities in this city, but the fieldwork was also conducted in the ancestral villages of Drammenian Turks origin in Turkey. This allowed me to make comparisons regarding the employment of researcher-generated photography in different geo-cultural settings. The research combined researcher-generated photography with more traditional methods such as ethnographic observation, in-depth and semi-structured interviews. In total, I collected 36 interviews with inhabitants of Drammen and experts, including those of Turkish descent, around 3000 photos of the space of Drammen and villages in Konya, and around 50 field notes and numerous informal conversations with people in Drammen and in the villages in Konya. Visual data were analyzed using the MaxQda software. Research findings were described elsewhere (Nikielska-Sekula, 2016a, b, 2018, 2019), while in the following two sections I focus primarily on theoretical and ethical issues around visual data collection, interpreting and publishing, which I faced during the research process.

2.3 Theoretical Implications of the Use of Photography in the Research Process

2.3.1 Realist-Conventionalist Dilemma

The recurrent question from the very beginning of visual representation's history has concerned the ontological issue of a presence of truth as an immerse element of a photographic image (see: Baudrillard, 1999; Bazin, 1963). “Throughout its history photography has been subjected to two opposing polarised theories of representation: those of realism and convention” (Wright, 2016). Realists have assumed a close relation of the photography with what it represents, while conventionalism has called this relationship in question, acknowledging the arbitrary way the photographs are constructed. While the realist – conventionalist opposition still constitutes a relevant issue within a framework of a modern visual literacy, some authors have proposed an approach to photographs that partly incorporates the assumption of these two different theoretical angles. Arnheim (1986, p. 112) claimed that “in order to make sense of photographs, one must look at them as encounters between physical reality and the creative mind of man”. The relationship between the photograph and its representation is therefore mediated by a human factor, either on a level of creation (the photographer), or on a level of interpretation (audience). I find Arnheim's (1986) statement useful as a starting point for building a theoretical discussion in this chapter for two reasons. Firstly, if visual methods are utilized as a way of data collection, there must be an underlying premise about the relationship between an image and what it represents. This is a condition sine qua non for recognizing visual data as of any value in representing social life (Ball & Smith, 1992, p. 22), and this is what the first part of Arnheim's statement conveys. Secondly, when any research in social sciences is conducted, regardless of the methods

employed, the human aspect is a factor influencing data and shaping the research situation, be it from the side of a researcher or a participant, and must therefore be taken into account. Photographs are not free from such influence and here Arnheim's "creative mind of man" comes into play.

The realist-conventionalist opposition in relation to the ontological value of a photographic image has driven numerous discussions, and activated various thinking traditions for approaching and analyzing photographs. One of the most popularized in social sciences is semiotics (Wright, 2016). Within this broad and heterogeneous discipline, there is a sound tradition to approach images as "visual signs" that refer to other things, and the relationship between image and its referent is assumed as "manmade", rather than natural (Baetens & Surdiacourt, 2012). In this regard, the oft-cited is a threefold sign typology by Pierce (1839–1914).¹ He classified photography as an icon, but later critics pointed out that because of a rather causal relationship between the photograph and the photographed, it should be seen as indexical (Wright, 2016; see also Nöth, 2012). When I started employing photography to better understand the life-worlds of the members of Turkish minority in Drammen, I had to recognize the relationship between the photograph and its referent to allow any meaningful analyses. This, however, did not implicate that this relationship was straightforward and unproblematic: that the picture represented the objective reality, or that what it presented could have been linked to only one referent (Nöth, 2012). Quite the contrary, all data I had obtained, regardless of the method used, were constructed and negotiated in the interaction between me – the researcher – research participants and structural and cultural features around the inquiry. What was captured by my photographs depended on my preconceptualizations, topic of the research and its immediate interpretations in the field (see also Desille, Chap. 4, this volume), focus driven by the respondents to particular phenomena, and broad structural and cultural features that make me and the respondents discuss particular issues and omit others. Relating therefore to the conventionalist – realist discussion around photography, the argument I would like to make here is that the relationship between the images taken in a photo survey and a fragment of social world that images depict is both conventional and real. Real – as a depicted world exists for some people in some circumstances and are seen by them as "objective" and constituting the exclusionary referent of the picture. Conventional, as the pictures may refer to several referents of various meanings for different audiences. The latter is exactly what I experienced at the stage of findings' presentation, when depictions of particular areas of the city of Drammen were seen as familiar and home-like by some, and unfamiliar and exotic by others. This argument sustains the statement of Arnheim (1986), that photographs are encounters between physical reality and a creative mind of man. What is more, an overall conclusion from the discussion on the objectivity of pictures as tools of inquiry is that photography as a method of data collection within social sciences is a subject to a very similar

¹Pierce typology of sign: sign as an icon (closely resembles the referent), index (connection between the sign and the referent is casual), and symbol (relationship between the sign and referent is established conventionally) (Nöth, 2012; Wright, 2016)

influence of a “humanistic coefficient” as more traditional methods such as interviews and ethnographic observation are (see also Becker, 1998).

While a semiotic statement on the constructed relationship between the photograph and the photographed is useful in visual inquiry as demonstrated above, some researchers pointed out the limits semiotics pose in approaching images that should be taken into account when “researching visually”. The status of photographs as signs has been of a particular interest of visual semiotics, which focused on similarities between the structure of images and the structure of language (Nöth, 2012). Because of this correspondence, the approach to decode images by “reading” them in an analogous way verbal signs can be decoded was popularized. Baetens and Surdiacourt (2012) argue that such dominance of textual analogies in approaching the images is problematic in the light of the visual turn (Mitchell, 1992), which brought a recognition of the ability of images to communicate messages independently of language. Baetens and Surdiacourt (2012) encourage researchers to “go beyond what is often called linguistic imperialism” by seeking more image-center ways of analyzing and approaching photographs in a “postlinguistic” or

Fig. 2.1 Graffiti relating to a Turkish right wing party (MHP), and the city of Konya in Turkey. Konya is where many of Turks settled in Drammen originate and MHP party is quite popular in this area. The connection is easy to establish for the insider, but not so obvious for the outsiders



“postsemiotic” manner. They also underline that we are yet in a phase of defining what terms such as “postlinguistic” and “postsemiotic” actually mean, and the answer to this question is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, this discussion shows that the paradigm of semiotics may pose certain limitations in relation to visual inquiry to which I return later in the chapter.

2.3.2 *Place-Based Photographs*

Gibson (1979) developed the ecological approach to visual perception, which sought a more holistic way to address the act of seeing. He broke with a mind-body dichotomy in perception, stating that it is not only the eyes that observe but the eyes located in a particular body located in particular settings:

One sees the environment not with the eyes but with the eyes-in-the-head-on-the-body-resting-on-the-ground. Vision does not have a seat in the body in the way the mind has been thought to be seated in the brain. (Gibson, 1979, p. 205)

Drawing on Gibson’s theory, I would like to shed light on two factors important and complementary to seeing in this and following sections: the physical location of the body of a photographer (body-resting-on-the-ground) (Sects. 2.3.2 and 2.3.3) and her positionality (the-head-on-the-body) (Sect. 2.3.4).

The idea of the body-resting-on-the-ground as complementary to the act of seeing lies at the very core of visual ethnography. While new technologies, and here I particularly refer to drones, enable employing researcher-generated photography to the methodological tool box without setting a foot on the ground, the majority of ethnographic research still utilizes a traditional idea of the researcher’s presence in the field. Following from this is the assumption that pictures taken in the field as part of data collection are “place-based”, to use Klett’s (2012) terminology: “One reason photographs are so useful is they originate from a real position in space” (Klett, 2012).

This observation made by Klett (2012) is crucial in the context of migration research. In a public discourse, and to some extent in scholarly work on migration, migrants and refugees are often presented as stuck in-between cultures and localities. What is underlined is their uprootedness and living in a transnational social space. The impression stemming from this is that migrants live their lives in an abstract space of in-betweenness, while spatial aspects of their every-day routines go unattended. Instead, people’s bodies are material and so are their surroundings. Everyday life forces them to respond to the local circumstances of their new places of settlement. In my research, I found that the respondents had developed their unique belonging in Norwegian society under the umbrella-identity of (Norwegian) Turkishness. While they identify as Turks and participate actively in various Norwegian-Turkish communities, they underline that their living space is in Norway and their belonging and home-like experiences are rooted in the local places of Drammen. Employing photography to my research allowed “materializing” respondents’ transnationalism, revealing that various aspects of their transnational



Fig. 2.2 Turkish mosque in Drammen located in a former Adventist church. Inside (b) and outside (a)



Fig. 2.3 Turkish free time club located in a wooden house typical of Norway (a). Inside (b): antique wall with traditional rose painting acknowledged as Norwegian heritage, a picture of Ataturk, the founder of Turkish republic, and King Olav of Norway

livelihoods were adjusted to the local circumstances of Norway and had an imprint of this locale. One example here are the artefacts typical of Turkey such as tea machines and pottery with inscriptions either in Norwegian or supporting Norwegian sport clubs. Presenting them along with written findings enhanced the message of placing Norwegian Turks' belonging in Norway. Another example showing that photography helped to reveal the localized aspects of Norwegian-Turkish everyday life concern Norwegian design and aesthetics of buildings hosting Norwegian Turkish associations in Drammen – things that went unattended at a first glance as I was overwhelmed by the issues that distinguished these places from the mainstream. This showed as well how photography could be more fruitful than field notes that are based either on researcher's memory or on an immediate observation in which some details may be omitted (see Gnes, Chap. 14, this volume).

A tendency to acknowledge migrants' belonging to the local places they are settled in is present within migration studies (Buhr, 2018; Çağlar, 1997, 2001; Ehrkamp, 2005; Fangen, 2007a, 2007b; Savaş, 2014), but there is still much more to be done here. Photography, as a place-based (Klett, 2012) medium enhances the ability to highlight the local aspects of migrants' day-to-day business and their rootedness in a new homeland, therefore serving the purposes of "locating transnationalism", showing directly that so-called "foreign" or "exotic" practices, associations, and alike are located in a new homeland and constitute a part of it. Following from this is an observation that migrants constitute a part of new homeland societies and belong to them through their everyday practices. These could also have been discovered with traditional methods, but the very nature of photography as a place-based (Klett, 2012) medium evokes the conclusion that migrants are located rather than dislocated in a more straightforward manner.

Theoretical implications of the employment of photography discussed here refers therefore to two aspects: First, by involving a spatial realm into investigations of the social relationships of migrants, photography sheds light on their rootedness in a receiving society by either denying their "in-betweenness", or showing that even so-called "in-betweenness", or more broadly, transnationalism, is spatially located, materialized locally in new homelands, and is influenced by the local circumstances. From the above, a second theoretical implication follows, namely seeing migrants as members of new homeland societies. Even if denied or marginalized, migrants, documented or not, rarely live in a complete separation from the societies they are settled in, and therefore their livelihoods constitute a part of the new homelands. The place-based (Klett, 2012) nature of photography is capable of revealing this.

2.3.3 Research Context as a Finding

Gibson's (1979) photographer's body-resting-on-the-ground has yet another implication for the research findings, apart from the very outcome of this stance described in a previous paragraph: a place-based photograph (Klett, 2012). Namely, the physical presence of a photographer in the field prompts various social relations, while local context influences what a photograph depicts, and provides interpretation frameworks. The latter was discussed and acknowledged by theorists of photography, who claimed that while there are pictures that deliver a story, the context they were taken in is equally important. Becker claimed that "Photographs get meaning ... from their context" (Becker, 1998, p. 88) and the lack of it forces the audience to use "their own resources" (p. 89) and interpret the picture within the framework of viewers' own cultural habitus. This possessive interpretation presents dangers especially in the context of migration research, where some cultural practices and habits of the actors may be unfamiliar to local or international audiences and therefore misunderstood. There is an agreement that displaying photographs obtained in research requires contextualizing them. It is the responsibility of the



Fig. 2.4 Landscape of a village in Konya province that has experienced a significant emigration to Europe. Local, stone-make dwellings contrast with big houses built from remittances

researcher-photographer to acquire such meaning from the field, and to do so visual methods often have to be supported by other forms of inquiry (Gold, 2004; Martiniello & Boucher, 2017). Nevertheless, providing a verbal context to the photographs does not have to undermine their power to communicate messages independently from the language. On the contrary, while the written context sets a framework for reception, these are the images that interact with viewers' sense of aesthetics, and her socio-cultural background that influences her perception of the world. While presenting pictures obtained in the villages of my respondents' origin in Konya province in Turkey, I had to verbally provide a thorough context of causes and consequences of labor migration for this area, but these were images that “spoke” e.g. about contrasting economic and aesthetic features between the dwellings of local villagers and holiday houses of Norwegian Turks built after years spent in Norway. The verbal context did not reduce images to a role of mere illustrations, but rather served as a counteraction against possible misconceptions the pictures with no context could have brought.

Another issue that is discussed here regards a mere context of photo taking that can deliver important information at early stages of the research influencing its focus and the findings. Below I describe how the context of picture taking can be a source of data and can influence what the photo depicts.

We like to think that while hidden behind the camera, we become invisible to the people around. This is, however, rarely the case. Researchers are not transparent, and in many circumstances camera makes them even more visible at least at the

initial stages of the interaction, and its presence may alert people. While taking pictures the photographer does not only see the surrounding. She is also seen by people around. This can further cause reactions or lack of them and can initiate social relations or not. Both possibilities deliver important information about the field that should be included in analyses. While taking pictures in public places of the neighborhoods of Drammen, Norway, I was approached by people making sure that they, their houses, and shops were not photographed. People consenting to be photographed would check the outcome and sometimes would ask me to delete the picture if it did not appeal to them. As a consequence, when displaying pictures from my research in Norway at international conferences, I was often accused of talking about social relationships while presenting pictures empty of people (Fig. 2.5). This was indeed the case – after a series of unpleasant conversations and comments concerning the act of picture-taking, I avoided photographing people in Norway. These basic reactions to the photo-taking, however, told me a lot about the character of the investigated area with high anonymity concerns shared also among the members of minorities. In Turkey, in turn, similar reactions in public places were rare. The situation in private places was different, as I would always ask for permission for photo-taking upon arrival. Still, in Norway my hosts were careful to leave the scene so as not to appear on a picture, while in Turkey they generally would not do that. Interestingly, the hosts in Norway I am referring to were of Turkish origin. This experience directed my attention to significant differences between people of Turkish background settled in Norway, as affected by high anonymity concerns quite common in Norwegian society, and Turks living in Turkey.



Fig. 2.5 Empty streets of Drammen

This shifted my attention from the Turkishness of the members of Norwegian Turkish communities, to the possible differences between them and Turks in Turkey, as well as their links to and influences from Norwegian society. In this regard, social relationships initiated during photo-taking became an important element of the research process and influenced the further direction of the investigation and eventually the findings. In other words, a very context of an act of picture-taking became data. Theoretical implication of this is to consider treating the process of data collection as part of collected data. In my research, this approach proved to be fruitful as it brought new angles of analyses and shed new light on the investigated community.

Social reactions prompted by the presence of a camera may yet influence another issue, namely what is photographed and what is not. Researchers are expected to follow ethical standards and should be sensitive to the issues of informed consent (Ball, 2014). There are settings where obtaining a formal consent for photographing is difficult or impossible. Examples here may be crowded streets and public places, where asking all pedestrians for consent is simply not doable. It is the responsibility of the researcher to understand which strategies are acceptable in any given local circumstances and adjust photo-taking so as not to violate people's privacy and local rules and this is what I did when collecting data in Turkey and in Norway. In more private settings, such as associations, places of worship and private houses, in turn, I encountered a host who would accompany me directing the attention of the camera towards particular things while omitting others. While adjusting to the local rules of what is accepted and what is not, an act necessary to secure ethical standards of the research, the researcher allows the context to determine what pictures actually depict, the way I did it to comply with high anonymity standards in Norway. All this resulted in the context of picture-taking, a very presence of the body on the ground holding the camera, influencing what was present and what was absent on the pictures taken during my fieldwork. Paying attention to these nuances was a part of analyses too, and it delivered information about the field that otherwise would not come up if it was not for the presence of a camera.

2.3.4 Positionality

Finally, Gibson's (1979) head-on-the-body can be related to the individual positionality of the researcher that regards both, her socio-cultural and economic background (that will be metaphorically described here as “the head”), and physical appearance, age, way of clothing, and more (“the body”). This positionality influences the social relationships occurring in the field shaping broadly understood context. Before I started my research on Turkish communities in Norway, I was already familiar with practices, smells, aesthetics that were associated with Turkey as I lived, studied and worked in the country for relatively short periods (up to 6 months) several times. I therefore had expectations of what Turkishness in Norway might be. When starting the research, I could have recognized smells, tastes, aesthetics and

clothing as familiar and resembling of Turkey. This experience was important in making connections between Turkish communities in Norway and Turkey. But it also helped me grasp things that were different from those common in Turkey. My positionality, therefore influenced the way I interpreted the events observed in the field (see Clarke, 2005), determining further what was photographed and what was not.

Familiarity and “naturalization” of some fragments of the research situation may push it outside the scope of analyses. An example of such omission in the context of migration research regards undermining similarities (and overestimating differences) between the mainstream and minority population. Influences of local, mainstream society, from architecture to practices and habits of people, may look “transparent” and may therefore be omitted in a search for “exotic” themes. As a result, research may remain biased giving a false impression of unfamiliarity of immigrant districts. All supported by a photographic documentation of difference that leaves out the similarities and enhances a false image of immigrant communities as disconnected from mainstream society. As a non-native Norwegian, who had newly arrived in the country to conduct research on Norwegian Turks, I did not have the sense of familiarity with this country developed, learning about it while conducting research on Norwegian Turks. This alerted me to unfamiliar yet common practices and aesthetics in Norway that I had encountered in Turkish communities. In this regard, my experiences based on my individual positionality were involved in the research along with photo-taking influencing my seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting the field and projecting further on the interpretation of obtained visual data.

Following from this is another issue rarely discussed in a context of more traditional research methods – sensory experiences of the field that shape the way findings are interpreted. Pink (2007, 2012) advocated that the Western idea of approaching senses as separated from each other is problematic: “the five senses do not travel along separate channels, but interact to a degree few scientists would have believed only a decade ago” (Cytowic, 2010, p. 46). She further suggested that taking photographs involves not only vision, but is related to other senses that the Westerners would call “smell, touch, hearing, and taste”:

vision is not just about looking at images; rather it is part of the multisensory processes through which we interpret the total environment in which we exist, as well as the specific material objects that we encounter. (Pink, 2012)

Pink (2012) advocates a need for

A reflexive approach [that] would involve developing an awareness of the culturally and personally specific sensory categories that one uses as a person and as a researcher, as well as the moral values and judgments attached to these. (Pink, 2012)

When the-body-on-the-ground conducts the fieldwork, the senses driven by individual positionality of the researcher are activated. The researcher cannot stop the impression of familiarity or unfamiliarity driven by a joint experiences of smells, textures or observed aesthetics, and these are tightly linked to her own positionality and past experiences. This is how I approached and recognized Turkishness while in

the field – associating it with smells and aesthetics familiar from Turkey. The inconsistencies between experiencing Turkishness in Turkey and in Norway directed my attention to a very important finding about significant influences from a Norwegian mainstream society on Norwegian Turks. This shows that often not fully conscious or controlled impressions are cast on the interpretations of the field and have a real impact on the findings.

The approach of considering senses as reliable measures for an academic inquiry is getting popularized in the field of studies such as sensory anthropologies, geographies, and sociologies (Pink, 2012). Sensory experiences are part of researcher's individual positionality and they indeed influence the research process in the same way the other dimensions of positionality do (Clarke, 2005). Acknowledging them in a research process therefore seems justified, while using them in an inquiry in a systematic way, as proposed by Pink (2012), can extend the understanding of the research situation, e.g. by providing a reflexive angle of researcher's experiences of familiarity and difference in the field.

2.4 Ethical Challenges

All researchers have to follow ethical standards while conducting research. Usually, the universities and local ethical committees deliver ethical guidelines. These are, however, rarely able to address the context-sensitive ethical challenges while conducting and publishing the research. Some research situations are more sensitive than others, and this is especially true for research in a context of migration, which often involves subjects who are in various ways vulnerable (Ball, 2014, p. 153). While ethical challenges connected to using visual methods were extensively discussed by Rose (2012) and Pink (2007), in this section I would like to draw the reader's attention to three aspects especially relevant for ethics around researcher-generated photography in a context of migration research. These aspects center on the following topics: 1. Deciding what to display and what to hide, 2. Ethical standards in different geo-cultural locale, 3. Anonymity concerns vs. agency.

2.4.1 *What to Display and What to Hide*

Deciding what to display and what to hide is one of the most important tasks of the researcher with regard to research ethics. This claim is especially relevant in relation to visual methods, since here the displayed faces and artefacts take a concrete shape and are not anonymous, contrary to the written description of them, which can skip identifying information such as name, geo-location etc. Nöth (2012) described five limitations images pose compared the written text in relation to what they cannot express in a way the text can: Negation, Causality, Modalisation, Deixis, and Metareference and Self-reference. With regard to the latter he stated:

“Pictures can only show their own qualities: they cannot explicitly “speak” about them, nor can they generalize” (ibid.). While this characteristic may be seen as an advantage in a qualitative research process, where the focus is on deep meanings and an accurate depiction of social life in a particular context – purposes to which pictures can be “worth a thousand words”, this also has a negative side in relation to research ethics. Photographs display whatever they have depicted and cannot skip certain information without losing its quality in the way the words can. It is therefore more difficult to anonymize people and places that constituted a focus of our research, and therefore a researcher should make wise choices with regard to publication.

During the fieldwork, I encountered problematic issues and had to make ethical decisions on how to protect the best interest of the participants to the study. As a consequence, I did not publish pictures depicting potentially problematic issues. In this regard, I made a choice of what to display and what to hide, even though displaying the pictures that presented the phenomenon would be much more convincing than a written description of it, which, in turn, provides anonymity.

2.4.2 Changing Ethical Standards in Different Localities

The second issue that is especially relevant in relation to migration studies regards changing ethical standards in different social and geographical locale. At its core, migration research has a focus on people and groups of various origins, whose practices and values may differ or even stand in contrast to those in receiving societies and/or to those of a researcher. What is more, there is an established practice in social sciences to approach migration as a back and forth phenomena (Andrews, 2014), and some researchers choose to conduct research also in the local areas of migrants origin, as I did, where, again, practices and system of values may significantly differ from those represented by the researcher and her institution. A question that I had to face when photographing in Turkey was “which ethical standards should I use, local or Norwegian?” Pink (2012) argues that ethics are always situated, and in this regard, ethical standards should be adjusted to the local expectations. Nevertheless, in my case, the local expectations were less strict than those from my home institution. I decided to follow the rule of informed consent. This, however, did not solve the problem of photographing children. In Norway, children’s privacy was especially protected. I would be approached by the strangers raising doubts whenever I was photographing around the schools. I have also experienced a protest of a 10-year-old boy who thought I took a picture of him, and who asked me with suspicion: “Have you just taken a picture of me?”. In Turkey, neither children, nor their parents had a problem with being photographed and the ethical question that I faced was whether I have a right to approach children’s privacy unequally in different geolocations, and how to reconcile it with children’s own agency.



Fig. 2.6 School in an immigrant-populated district in Drammen

Changing geolocations, therefore, induces a series of questions concerning different ethical standards and expectations in various geo-cultural settings. The researcher should carefully reflect on whether she can benefit from a greater freedom in picture taking in places with less strict approach to anonymity protection, or should she rather stick to her strictest ethical standards at all times. Addressing these issues requires a great amount of sensitivity and a close focus on both an informed consent (Ball, 2014) and a dignity (Langmann & Pick, 2014). In a context of photo-taking, however, the researcher should be aware of global as well as class differences regarding the consciousness of the consequences of a photo being taken and displayed. I believe that it is unethical to benefit from this bias to obtain more extended material.

2.4.3 *Anonymity Protection vs. Agency*

Finally, the tension between anonymity protection and agency should be discussed here. Studying migration often involves vulnerable subjects. This becomes problematic especially with regard to presenting e.g. pictures of undocumented migrants, even if we have obtained their consent. The question of agency prompts: can people decide for themselves if their photos are being displayed or is it the researcher who holds the responsibility for their protection and has a final say? I believe that the

seriousness of the consequences the migrants can face in the future, including deportation, urges the researcher to make choices with regard to the longitudinal well-being of the research participants. Another issue that is relevant here is a right to disappear, a concept coined by Patricia Prieto in preparatory discussions to this volume. How long is the consent researcher has obtained from the research participants valid, and how to provide the participants with a right to disappear after the findings are published? These questions should be considered when making decisions about publishing images of research participants. I decided not to display pictures of people that have directly participated in my study as I was not able to predict the longitudinal consequences of their identity being compromised. What is more, I wanted to grant them the right to disappear and I felt that displaying their faces would significantly limit this right. After all, visual methods are not primarily about displaying images but about collecting data via images. Displaying visual data should be done carefully, in the same way as quoting interviews is done, when the researcher omits the information that may compromise anonymity or decides what to hide to spare the researched community the harm. The main principle here is a consideration of the best interest of a subject.

2.5 Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates how visual methods, and especially researcher-produced photography, can open new angles of analyses of migrants' life-words. It discussed theoretical implications of a place-based character of photography (Klett, 2012), namely the rooted and local to the new homeland character of migrants' transnationality. Further it presented the role of context in the research process, indicating that the social relationships prompted by a very act of picture-taking both influences what the collected photographs depict, and delivers important information about the field, becoming the source of data and influencing the findings. Moreover, a multi-sensory positionality of the researcher was discussed with a focus on a holistic engagement of the senses, vision included, while photographing. Finally, ethical considerations with regard to the use of photography of migrants and in changing geo-cultural settings were presented. The chapter advocated a number of advantages in the employment of photography to research, indicating the ways this can enhance inclusion and recognition of migrants as members of the new homeland societies.

Theoretically, the chapter built on the premises of semiotics, acknowledging the relationship between the photo and its referent. I have signalled, however, the problem voiced by Baetens and Surdiacourt (2012) about the overly linguistic nature of semiotics when it comes to the photo analyses. Looking for "postsemiotic" forms of approaching images and going beyond the textual character of the image involves recognising the value of images in delivering research findings that traditional methods would not deliver. The question relevant here, though, is to what extent

pictures can be left on their own with no support of language at all, and at which stages of research this is appropriate and ethical. As stated earlier, in a context of migration research, the challenge in letting images stand on their own at the stage of findings’ presentation regards the risk of a reproduction of misconceptions about the presented reality that can cause serious harm against exposed people and communities. Recognising pictures as equal means of communication to language is a one thing, another is leaving pictures with no or too superficial contextual information, the latter assumed by Becker (1998) as a mere ignorance.

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Chapter 3

Migrants' Mental Maps: Unpacking Inhabitants' Practical Knowledges in Lisbon



Franz Buhr

Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice.

Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life

3.1 Introduction

A common consequence of sticking to a research topic for a fair amount of time is that it starts colonising your everyday life to a point where you may find yourself asking questions to every new acquaintance as if they were participants in your project. Your friends may become tired of your constant interrogations, but unknown people might simply take you as someone with a peculiar sense of curiosity. I believe this is what recently happened to me when coming back from a conference and decided to call an Uber driver at Lisbon airport.

The driver who picked me up quickly noticed my Brazilian accent (my accent from São Paulo, to be more precise) and told me we were compatriots. He was also from São Paulo and had come to Lisbon some 6 months before that ride. Because we were both Brazilians, he said, he felt comfortable to tell me certain things, like the fact that he did not have a legal immigration status at the time. He then told me how difficult it was for him to get a Portuguese fiscal number:

‘You cannot simply go to any random *Finanças* (the tax office); some of the offices ask you to bring two Portuguese persons to testify you live here; some do not accept an informal rent contract as proof of address; I don’t have a contract and I don’t know anyone here. At some *Finanças* offices, they don’t require any of that. You see, you really have to know where to go; they (tax offices) are not all alike’.

And he went on telling me (I might have asked a couple of questions in that direction) about registering at the local health centre, choosing a neighbourhood for him

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and his wife (“I had to look for a nicer place with nicer surroundings when she joined me from Brazil”), but also about places to go for cheap Brazilian food. Our conversation was interrupted due to a brief loss of signal in the GPS app, the tool he uses to navigate the city, and he had to restart the device. “When the app crashes I can’t go anywhere; I don’t know how to get around here. The other day, when the app wouldn’t work, I had simply to stop the car, apologize to the customer and wait”.

It struck me how he managed to know so much about the practicalities of living in Lisbon as an immigrant in so little time. His Lisbon was flagged with the resources and spatial strategies he resorts to in order to carry a life here. Knowing *where-to*, *how-to* and *what-for* is what furnishes a partially unknown territory with the functionalities that allow one to *work* a city. He did obtain a fiscal number and he did find suitable accommodation for himself and his wife. It wasn’t easy, he argued, but he did it. And yet, it seemed natural for him to state he did not know the city without the app, that he would be lost without it. This paradox makes us ask what is it, after all, to know a city?

The driver’s story encapsulates two ways of knowing a city. One, which has to do with a city’s form, its streets and names, the kind of knowledge that the GPS device shows the driver. A cartographical city, a city of trajectories, of beginnings and ends, of routes. A second sort of knowledge pertains rather to a city’s resources, its content, what it serves for. A city of places, of activities, of utilities and potency. These two ways of knowing are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are deeply interrelated. Nevertheless, they differ in terms of legitimacy. Cartographic knowledge, the bird’s eye perspective over the city, is assumed to be truth, real knowledge, so much so that the driver refers to that perspective when states not to know Lisbon. His personal expertise about the city, its resources and how to use them, would not count as knowledge.

This chapter unpacks these two ways of knowing a city by looking at mental maps drawn by migrants in Lisbon, Portugal. As a research method, mental maps are not particularly new (Lynch, 1960); they have been widely used in migration research as a way to understand migrants’ spatialities: from the formation of a sense of place to the geographies of urban segregation (Pezzoni, 2013); from depicting spaces of belonging to showing spaces of exclusion (Silva & Fonseca, 2018). Rather than presenting a history of the ways mental maps have been utilised in social scientific scholarship (for that see Gieseck, 2013), this chapter explores mental maps as a method for grasping migrants’ integration to urban space. I argue that mental maps are a fundamental research tool for exposing under-researched qualities of migrants’ relationships with new urban territories while acknowledging their active role as urban inhabitants in mobilising cities’ resources. The chapter ends by making a case for the researcher-participant interactive capacity mental maps offer, and discusses some of the method’s specific potentialities.

3.2 Working with Mental Maps in Urban Contexts

Mental maps are usually produced as freehand drawn images outlining (but not limited to) spatial elements as they are experienced and imagined by individuals. Often called “cognitive maps”, these graphic images have served various purposes in social scientific scholarship. Researchers have asked participants to produce mental maps in order to understand identity formation, spatial awareness, orientation and navigation, social perception of boundaries, emotional and border geographies, spatial justice, confidence, feelings of urban unsafety, etc. Research participants, thus, can be given more or less precise instructions on what to represent on the map: their everyday itineraries across the city, the spaces where they feel secure, the places where they have had negative experiences (discrimination, racism or sexual assault, for instance); they may be asked to draw such graphic elements on a blank sheet of paper or on a pre-formatted cartographical map. They may also be asked to label, make a legend or to colour an already existing map.

Mental maps have the capacity of making visible traits of “the movements of people as they come and go between places (wayfinding)” through “the re-enactment of those movements in inscriptive gesture (mapping)” (Ingold, 2000, p. 234). In this sense, they work as biographic devices (Harley, 1987), displaying personal histories of human-space interaction. Like other personal accounts, mental maps do not exhaust participants' knowledge of a place (Kitchin & Freundschuh, 2000); therefore parameters such as “completeness” or “perfection” are usually avoided altogether. Mental maps bring up vernacular information and embodied everyday perceptions, and thus raise the question of whose knowledge and of what kind of knowledge is taken into account (Wright, 1947, p. 2). This discussion has been taken forward by critical counter-cartography (Counter Cartographies Collective; Dalton & Mason-Deese, 2012; kollektiv orangotango+, 2018), calling into question the monopoly of traditional cartographical knowledge and re-working its tools for community-building practices, social movements' strategies, or simply to reveal invisible/invisibilised spatial understandings of neighbours, minorities, and migrants.

The critique of positivist cartography (Crampton & Krygier, 2005) has also paved the way for unconventional modes of map-making. This renewed interest for the map form and the knowledge possibilities it enables spilled over to other social sciences and to art. Solnit's series of atlases, for example, proposes to excavate the many layers that make up cities like San Francisco, New Orleans and New York, from the perspective of its inhabitants, artists, community leaders, etc. (Solnit, 2010; Solnit & Jelly-Schapiro, 2016; Solnit & Snedeker, 2013). The spatial turn in art has also examined the relationship between map-making and artistic practice. According to Cosgrove (2005, p. 36), “not only have the critical interpretative and iconographic methods of art history been widely applied to maps, but interest among contemporary artists in mapping themes has significantly increased”. In this context, pre-modern maps and mental maps have particularly drawn attention due to their creative, decorative and personal imprints. Artists themselves have joined

forces with social scientists and migrants in order to explore the possibilities offered by mental maps (Mekdjian, 2015).

Within academic literature, mental maps vary not only as to the themes they are expected to address, but also in terms of how researchers deal with them. This has to do with their “methodological stretch”, that is, to their reach as research tools and to the ways they may be operationalised. Take, for instance, Ramadier’s study (2009) regarding foreigners’ social representation of space. In his study, Ramadier looked at how international students represented the city of Paris in order to introduce the notion of “environmental cultural capital”. Students were asked to draw a mental map of Paris and pinpoint the urban elements they considered most relevant. Six elements were chosen for each map and their topological precision was measured and scored, by contrast to an official map of Paris. A final mark was attributed to each map, based on which Ramadier distinguished two forms of “environmental capital” acquisition, one embodied (through early familiarity with Parisian-like urbanism) and one acquired (through their need to use the city for different purposes).

By juxtaposing participants’ drawings with an official cartographic map and judging them based on their precision and accuracy, Ramadier implicitly assumes that there is a straightforward relation between spatial experience and the act of representation contained in the mental maps participants have produced. As Tuan (1977, p. 68) has noted, “people who are good at finding their way in the city may be poor at giving street directions to the lost”. Rather than the multifaceted city-inhabitant relationship, what Ramadier measured was actually participants’ drawing skills and familiarity with cartographical codes. To this particular usage of mental maps, Cosgrove (1999, p. 7) argued that

‘cognitive mapping’ means much more today than was conceived by its 1960s investigators, who took for granted the existence of an objectively mappable and mapped space against which their ‘mental maps’ could be compared. Not only is all mapping ‘cognitive’ in the broadest sense, inescapably bound within discursive frameworks that are historically and culturally specific, but all mapping involves sets of choices, omissions, uncertainties and intentions – authorship – at once critical to, yet obscured within, its final product, the map itself.

Embracing the authorial nature of maps, Pezzoni (2013, 2016), on a different note, worked with transit migrants’ cognitive maps in order to understand the specificities of their needs and rapport to the city of Milan, Italy. She was interested in the extent to which transitory populations could “offer a representation of the city from a mobile point of view, due to a housing condition marked by instability” (2016, p. 94). Her findings suggest that the

stratification of the city that emerges from these scattered points (the key urban resources identified by migrants) is unknown to those who are permanent residents, but neither is it evident to those who are looking for the services, as these services constitute a set of places to be discovered, place by place, always starting a new search from scratch (2016, p. 106).

Pezzoni argues that the data gathered through mental maps could originate a “first arrival map”, potentially adopted by public services, where key urban equipment

would be displayed for those to whom the city is still unfamiliar. These maps may function as elements for evaluating and planning the access to basic and urgent resources necessary for individuals settling in Milan. The data they contain shed light on patterns of urban segregation, racism and exclusion, or of hospitality and accessibility, and may help reform and conduct public policies that are more comprehensive, inclusive, and attentive to the needs of those who would benefit from them.

Methodologically, Pezzoni proceeded as to transpose and adapt Lynch's (1960) mental map categories (paths, boundaries, living spaces, nodes, and landmarks) for the study of transitory inhabitants, and classified accordingly the spatial elements portrayed by research participants. Differently from Ramadier (2009), Pezzoni's understanding of mental maps had nothing to do with accuracy and cartographical precision. Her study aimed at recognising a constellation of spatial elements deemed relevant for a transitory population and, therefore, a formal analysis of mental maps' elements was sufficient.

In contrast, some scholars believe that mental maps should rather be used in combination with other research methods. Kochan's (2016) exploration of migrants' spatialities in Chinese cities is a good example. Kochan examined the urban lives of internal migrants in Beijing and Shenzhen through a multi-method qualitative approach combining mental maps, walking interviews and participants' self-photography. He insists that "by using multiple methods, we are better equipped to look for alternative voices, spaces, and experiences that might otherwise be overlooked or dismissed by migrants themselves as "not representing" an imagined, "normal" migration experience' (2016, p. 231). Indeed, his empirical findings suggest that by looking exclusively to participants' mental maps, conclusions would easily tend to reiterate traditional narratives of migrant marginalization and spatial exclusion; whereas the recourse to walking interviews and to photographs taken by participants helped unsettling such narratives and locate migrants into much finer descriptions of spatial experience beyond pre-prescribed migration research categories (Carling, Bivand, & Ezzati, 2014).

The examples provided above expose three ways of operating mental maps in migration research. As a research method, mental maps are versatile; yet, the usage we make of them necessarily entails a set of assumptions regarding the nature of spatial experience and the kind of representation mental maps are able to portray. The research project I discuss in the next section departs from a non-naturalistic understanding of mental maps, by which they are seen not as a straightforward register of a given spatial state of affairs, but as "an imaginative effort produced under the needs of the moment" (Tuan, 1975, p. 209), that is, under the researcher-participant engagement. Framed within this context, mental maps acquire, as I attempt to demonstrate, an *interactive* capacity allowing researchers *and* participants to discuss and overcome the very limitations of cognitive mapping, and to construct more complex depictions of participants' spatialities.

3.3 Unpacking Migrants' Practical Knowledges: Mental Maps and Urban Integration

The material that follows is part of a wider, European Commission-funded research project that I conducted in Lisbon, Portugal, regarding migrants' use of space and urban integration. The project addressed the relationship between migrants and their urban surroundings, which involves not only the city's built environment, its locations and morphologies, but also the complex system of practical knowledge and skills employed by inhabitants in order to cover distances, use spaces and comply with all sorts of life requirements. Fieldwork was carried out in 2015 and 2016, and the conversations with participants provided below were conducted in Portuguese.

The project revolved around the idea that cities are complex networks of resources that require knowledge for being used (Buhr, 2018a); they are "constantly sought to be learnt and relearnt by different people and for often very different reasons" (McFarlane, 2011, p. 362). Yet, learning how to use a city does not happen from one day to the other, nor does it result from internalizing a compendium of ready-made urban information: urban apprenticeship takes time and comes about as city dwellers interact with urban space in order to comply with the practicalities of everyday life. Migrants, nevertheless, face the challenge of learning how to attend to those everyday needs in a new environment together with the urgency for settlement, finding work, services, leisure and making personal connections (Buhr & McGarrigle, 2017). Migrants' urban practical knowledges become, therefore, a privileged standpoint from which to understand their connections to urban resources and the kinds of urban experience available to them.

José¹ (40s) landed in Portugal in 2004 coming from Guinea-Bissau, a former Portuguese colony in West Africa. We talked about his first months in Lisbon and about how he used to get around in the city. By then, smartphones were not common and people did not have mobile internet networks the way they have now. So I asked if he used to carry a map of the city, to what he replied:

'we in Africa don't have this habit [of using maps], this is Europeans' stuff. Since our cities are totally different, we never walk around with maps there. In Lisbon, I kept on doing what I did before: whenever I didn't know how to get to places, I'd ask around'.

During our talk, though, José was proud to say that "things have changed" and to share that his friends nicknamed him "GPS": "It is *me* they turn to when they need instructions now". This sense of practical mastery, of being able to *work* the city for any given purpose, has rarely been advanced in migrant integration research, despite its evident relationship with migrants' urban well-being. Spatial confidence, that is, the feeling one knows one's surroundings and is able to navigate them autonomously, bears a rich research potential as it reveals how familiarity with urban space is constructed, dynamic and results from embodied spatial practice. He insisted: "and I am this come-and-go kind of person, so I know Lisbon pretty well; actually,

¹Participants' names have been changed.

not only Lisbon, I'd say the whole metropolitan area". And yet, when asked to draw a map of the spaces he used on a daily basis, José hesitated for a while saying he had "never been good with maps". Once I explained that there was no correct way of drawing, and that geographical scale and accuracy were not important, he accepted the challenge (see Fig. 3.1).

His hesitation to take on the mapping task was not unprecedented; other participants also seemed reluctant with the "map" reference and with what it entails. The authoritative knowledge of the map-form suggests that "the objective of mapping is to produce a "correct" relational model of the terrain" (Harley, 2011, p. 277), a task participants, understandingly, do not feel they can embark for. In response, I changed my approach to participants, asking them to *draw*, rather than to *map*. Just like the Uber driver from the beginning of the chapter believed not to know the city without a navigation app, participants' unease with cartographical knowledge of the city seems to indicate that knowing a city – that is, being able to navigate it and use its resources – does not necessarily translate into being able to represent it with the tools of cartographical tradition (Scott, 1998).

José's mental map was, by far, the most "zoomed out" of all my participants' maps. Figure 3.1 shows both José's drawing and a cartographical map of Lisbon's metropolitan area in order to stress the scale of his representation. The map gives important clues about his widened use of space. Lisbon itself is only a part of his drawing (the area represented in blue), and the suburbs appear side by side, but they do not orbit around Lisbon; instead they are arranged sequentially and along train line locations (orange part). Impressed with the scale of his map, I asked José to tell me how he got to know all those places, to what he replied: "you know, I worked for a while as a receptionist in a hotel, with tourism, and I answered to all sorts of questions about Lisbon". However, tourism information does not usually refer to the specific suburbs he chose to portray (which are more affordable districts, usually



Fig. 3.1 José's mental map

with large social housing projects). It was only when I asked him to tell me what he thought of the public transport system in Lisbon that he corrected me and said

‘there is not *one* public transport system here; there are two, one for the city centre and one for the peripheries. The waiting times for buses are quite different from one to the other, and there are more options in the centre, like trams [which do not exist in the suburbs]. There are places in the outskirts where you have to wait more than 30 minutes for a bus! I normally don’t wait that long; if it says 20 minutes [in the digital real-time information display] I plan another route, take another bus, walk ... But there are places where you have no other way but to wait because the alternatives are even worse’.

José’s familiarity with such a large-scale portion of Lisbon’s metropolitan area owes a great deal to the fact that he lives and has lived before in some of these suburban districts, where most of his acquaintances are still based. His daily need to commute – in search of work, for instance, during the time we had our conversation – required him to navigate significantly large distances and to rely on his knowledge of public transport options. Being aware of what his transport options are and of which ones are *preferable* testify to how his urban know-how cannot be divorced from his particular need to commute, his embodied spatial practices, and his current need to attend to different recruitment interview locations throughout Lisbon’s metropolitan area. More than that, they hint to his constructed abilities to circumvent or mitigate some of the effects of an unequal public transit structure (centre *versus* peripheral areas) by resorting to his urban know-how (Buhr, 2018b).

While José’s mental map gave me more or less clear directions on how to proceed with our conversation, Gabriela’s drawing was much more opaque. Coming from the south of Brazil, Gabriela (30s) arrived in Portugal in 2002 and began working as a caretaker and house cleaner. At the time we met, Gabriela had multiple jobs as a cleaner, working at people’s homes and at local shops. Like José, Gabriela also lives in a more affordable suburban area where she has easy access to a train line, bringing her everyday to the city centre. Due to the number of places she works at and to their non-contiguous locations, Gabriela needs to spend many hours per week in public transport. She recalls, laughing, how confusing it was for her to navigate the networks of public transit in Lisbon right after she moved here. “I come from a small town in Brazil, with less than 10,000 inhabitants. There’s no public transport there. (...) During my first months in Lisbon, I got lost so many times using the metro!”

Knowing the length of her stay in Portugal and her need to go about Lisbon, the mental map she drew (Fig. 3.2) turned out to be very intriguing. She began by drawing her home (in pink); an arrow (in yellow) marking her trajectory toward the metro station; then “Campo Pequeno” which is both a metro station and the place where a bus going to the beach passes by; a road, the bridge, the Tagus river; and across the river, “Costa da Caparica”, a beach town. Although I had asked her to draw the spaces she frequents on a daily basis, she opted to show me a sketch of her trips to the beach.

In Gabriela’s mental map, Lisbon is almost absent. Her map was telling me (or *not* telling me) something that our conversation was not. If I were to undertake a formal analysis of this apparent emptiness or inaccuracy, literature would possibly

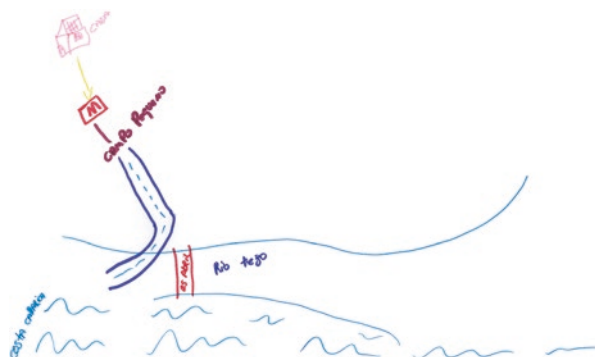


Fig. 3.2 Gabriela's mental map

suggest that people have limited ability to draw map-like images, or that such “incompleteness” could result from participants’ limited socio-spatial experience of that particular area (Fenster, 2009, p. 479). A blank space could, thus, be seen as a marker of spatial exclusion, of segregation, of danger or hostility. Yet, something seemed odd in that map given Gabriela’s spatial routine. Looking at her map, I asked Gabriela: “do you feel like you know Lisbon?”, and her answer could not have been more explicative:

‘Yes, where do you want to go? You can ask me anything: *metro stations*, places, shops, where you can buy this or that, where it’s cheaper, where they have sales; I know everything around here. (...) If you don’t want to walk that much, you can buy whatever you want at the shops *in* the metro stations, you can find everything there: clothes, bags, towels, pajamas, linen, everything. I only go to these shops, they are so practical’.

Gabriela does master Lisbon, a *subterranean* Lisbon that is convenient for someone who is always in transit – and that, too, is difficult to pin down. Getting to know Lisbon was predicated on her need to do groceries and buy whatever her family needs at the shops she passes by as a train and metro user – shops that are usually open until later hours. Her urban knowledge allows her to unearth the city’s potentialities in order to respond to her daily needs. The potency of her narrative is not subsumed to a quantification of the places she needs to go to, or the amount of time she spends in transport, but pertains rather to her ability to extract what she needs from her known surroundings.

Abilities, know-how, and skills cannot be measured. And yet, they provide us with crucial data regarding the ways migrants and other urban dwellers actively engage with the urban and circumvent its constraints. The two mental maps presented here functioned less as a finished object and more as a live, moving image, in which spatial depictions were connected to storylines by means of the researcher-participant interaction. As we have seen, when explored through participants’ narratives, mental maps do allow for skills and inhabitants’ know-how to come up. And skills are compressed knowledge about the world and about how to live in it (Ingold, 2000; Knowles, 2010) and just as they say something about individual urbanites and

their embodied production of knowledge, they also say something about the city itself – its fractures, its structures, its inequalities and distributions.

The examples above make a case for research to examine the micro-scale of migrants' spatial usage in order to identify how practices correspond to varied distributions of spatial resources among individuals. Sketch mapping can provide powerful descriptions of the ways migrants operate with the constraints and possibilities offered by urban space. This has been taken forward in very inspiring ways by Fawaz, Salamé, and Serhan (2018), for instance, in a research project with Syrian refugees in Lebanon working in the delivery business, driving scooters transporting pizzas, sandwiches, chicken and meals in general. Methodologically, the visualisations produced in their project demonstrate how individuals' aptitudes at practising the city may be aggregated and help unsettling common beliefs that refugees' whereabouts are limited to very specific and circumscribed areas of the city. Yet, they show how the access to the city as a whole is negotiated and takes place in face of severe constraints.

By looking at the “mechanics” of migrants' urban navigation it is possible not only to uncover the practical knowledges which often slip through the techniques of quantitative research, but also to understand the ways in which migrants do manage urban lives, in face of their relative privileges or disadvantages.

3.4 Mental Maps as Holograms

This chapter began with a reference to two interrelated ways of knowing a city. On the one side, the kind of knowledge that a cartographic map is able to bring forth: a city's form, its streets and names, the trajectories and routes it allows to take place, its official limits and demarcations. On the other side, a practical knowledge, an urban know-how shaping inhabitants' access to and use of space: an *un-mappable* expertise constructed through embodied engagement with urban space. These two ways of knowing a city, rather than conflicting, are actually complementary and simultaneously invoked in the process of urban navigation (Istomin & Dwyer, 2009, p. 41).

The examples provided by existing research findings signal to the potentialities and the limitations of mental maps in exposing the ways city inhabitants, in general, and migrants, in particular, know and use urban space. Nevertheless, they differ as to the ways participants' mental maps are read and operationalised. A close reading of mental maps privileges a formal analysis of the elements represented and of their accuracy and relevance; it distinguishes elementary maps from more complex ones based on the level of details exposed, the number of reference points perceived, and the structure of urban objects indicated. In a formal analysis, mental maps become sufficient research data; they stand on their own – or in comparison with cartographic maps.

Another strategy for reading mental maps departs from the recognition that acts of mapping are, as Cosgrove (1999, p. 2) states, “creative, sometimes anxious,

moments in coming to knowledge of the world, and the map is both the spatial embodiment of knowledge and a stimulus to further cognitive engagements". His argument invites us to look at maps as coded forms of knowledge transmission, but also to go beyond the map-form, exposing the creative processes that both shaped and enabled its existence. Such reading of mental maps does not reject maps' formal elements; instead, it looks at them as the result of an authorial representational gesture, which is limited by individuals' drawing abilities, but also charged with their personal take on space. As Tazzioli argues (2015, p. 2), besides the level of detail and the number of urban elements depicted, it also matters to look at what *inevitably falls out of the map*, including inhabitants' practical knowledges.

Yet, looking beyond the map is not arbitrary; as we have seen, looking for inhabitants' practical knowledges depends on a researcher-participant dialogue in which the mental map becomes a topic for discussion and clarification. In practical terms, this dialogue resembles the technique of photo elicitation (Harper, 2002), yet it differs from it in that what is discussed is actually produced on the spot by participants themselves, and that discussion may occur during the process of drawing. As Fenster (2009) has argued, this dialogue builds up trust and confidence between researcher and participant over the meanings of the drawing and bears the capacity to re-embed the map into individuals' narratives.

These two ways of operationalising mental maps are intimately related to the two ways of knowing a city we referred to earlier. If we are interested in measuring one's cartographical knowledge, their storage of spatial data and the ways that urban information is remembered and organised in a representational manner, than a formal evaluation of mental maps would do the job. An increment in one's capacity to navigate a given space, following this line of thought, means to be able to know more (Ingold, 2011) – to represent more items, to depict a greater number of spatial elements accurately and bearing resemblance with cartographic representations. Operating mental maps in such a way allows researchers to measure, to count, and to contrast participants' drawings with a reference model.

Alternatively, if we aim at understanding one's personal take on space, their own ways of using space and the messy, yet functional manner through which inhabitants navigate and connect urban resources, then to extrapolate the formality of mental maps is fundamental. In such a frame, an increment in one's capacity to navigate a given space means not to know more, but *to know it well*. And "knowing well" is fundamentally personal, embodied, changeable and unquantifiable. It relates to one's daily spatial needs, their capacities, and with how one interacts with the structural constraints and opportunities present in a given (urban) environment.

The examples provided from my own research project expose a couple of migrants' spatialities in Lisbon with and beyond the map form. Participants' common assumption that a map has no room for their idiosyncrasies is turned on its head as they realise, through dialogue, that their idiosyncrasies are just as meaningful (if not more) as the formal elements they choose to depict. However, establishing such dialogue is not only a way to mitigate participants' unease with the authoritative charge the term "map" inevitably brings about. My argument is that mental maps

may reveal their full potentialities as a research method *only when their interactive capacities are explored*.

Take José's and Gabriela's mental maps for instance. By drawing a zoom-out representation of Lisbon's metropolitan area (José) and by keeping Lisbon as a blank space (Gabriela), participants' maps prompted narratives that would hardly surface otherwise. As Gieseeking argued, "the most exciting insight that mental mapping affords social science research is another way of literally seeing and hearing participants' experiences that may go unrecorded if the studies of space and place rely solely on verbal interchange" (2013, p. 722). It was precisely *because* of the elements they chose to represent that our conversations took that particular direction. This is not the same as arguing that research-participant interaction, through the shape of a dialogue, is a fruitful additional method complementing mental maps, nor am I claiming that mental maps function as an illustration for participants' storytelling. I would like to suggest that the strength of mental maps as a research method is that narratives are latent in them, and that not making narratives emerge is to fall short of mental maps' potentialities.

Let me try to make my argument clearer by resorting to an analogy of mental maps as holograms. Like holograms, mental maps are imprinted on a surface that, when looked at from the front, reveal one (but only one) dimension they contain. However, by looking at a hologram from different angles, the viewed picture changes, showing depth where there was only a flat, one-dimensional image. Mental maps also contain more dimensions than what the actual formality of the drawing is able to expose. Yet, for mental maps' depth to come up, an interactive engagement between participant and researcher needs to take place. The word hologram comes from the Greek *holos*, "whole", and *gram*, "that which is drawn". A hologram means, literally, the whole picture. In this sense, excavating the mental map not only provides a more thorough description of its elements, but also re-embeds the map into the context of embodied spatial practice that made it possible in the first place. In other words, through researcher-participant engagement, mental maps yield not simply more information, but rather a different kind of information (Harper, 2002).

To unfold mental maps in such a way allows researchers to work with the method's full potentiality. Moreover, it makes room for a less abstracted analysis of participants' relationships with urban space. Latour once wrote that "most of what we call "abstraction" is in practice the belief that a written inscription must be believed more than any contrary indications from the senses" (1990, p. 51). By disclosing the narratives contained in mental maps, we allow for a more complex depiction of spatial practices to come about, one that is much less a projected line on a one-dimensional surface than the experience of a journey made, "a bodily movement from one place to the other" (Ingold, 1993, p. 154). Such perspective is not one that rejects the cartographic bird's eye-view, but one that embodies an ongoing relationship between a readable, coded city and the many uses to which it is put, the ways its spaces are lived, practiced, and experienced (de Certeau, 1984; Ingold, 1993).

Mental maps do not exhaust themselves in a formal analysis. Just as with holograms, sticking only to their face-value is to underutilise their full potentialities. Used in combination with other research methods or alone, mental maps magnify their potency in conveying information on human-space interaction when taken as an interactive methodology, in which the researcher-participant rapport is as fundamental as the actual visualisation produced. Mental maps are not once-and-for-all descriptions of inhabitants' spatialities; they are fragile achievements, condensing both personal and urban dynamics. Excavating them is a way to bring spatial practice under scrutiny, the very practices that make mental maps a tangible construction.

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Chapter 4

On the Use of Visual Methods to Understand Local Immigration Politics



Amandine Desille

4.1 Introduction

Non-textual ways of communication have always taken up a substantial part of the geographer's toolbox: "photographs, aerial photographs, satellite images, maps – and the application of GIS and GPS, so-called "geomatics" (Thornes, 2004, p. 787), are taken for granted in academic geographical practice today" (Schlottmann & Miggelbrink, 2009, p. 1). Beside these representations of space, stills and moving images have also been produced in very early geographical works relating to everyday lives, place, housing, urban development and identity. American filmmaker Robert Joseph Flaherty, best known for his pioneering documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922), was himself a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. The popularity of images has grown further recently (Burgess & Gold, 2015; Cresswell & Dixon, 2002; Kennedy & Lukinbeal, 1997) and human geographers have too participated in the structuration of the "visual" as a field of study, supporting an interdisciplinary, participatory and critical¹ agenda (Hawkins, 2018). New technologies, their lower cost and friendly-use, and the democratization of practices have therefore pushed visual methodologies forward, generating new practices beyond maps and aerial photographs. This chapter, although based on a research project developed within geography, contributes to this interdisciplinary agenda. As reiterated in the

¹Visual ethnography, at its beginnings, was associated with the colonial project (Pink, 2006, p. 5). Even though this seems in the past, Pink has observed that "Some recent publications on visual methods have (misguidedly) set out to discredit contemporary visual anthropology through criticism of its colonial roots and the observational projects of its mid-twentieth-century past (for example Smith et al., 2000; Holliday 2001)" (Pink, 2006, p. 15).

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introduction of this volume, the focus on people who have experienced migration makes more sense here, than the disciplinary internal debate on the visual.

With the broader adoption of visual methodologies, producers of still and moving images find themselves in an already overcrowded visual landscape. In geography and other disciplines that address international migrations, the need to consider the impacts of visual production has become even more acute during the cross-Mediterranean migrations that have reached unmatched media attention in Europe from 2015 on. Consequently, three sets of questions, often actualized (Raulin et al., 2016), have reemerged: one associated with positionality, reflexivity and interpretation; the second, related to ethics; and the third is concerned with participation, collaboration with participants to the research, and reciprocity in general.

In this chapter, I will present the making of an ethnographic film,² which I filmed during a research project in geography carried out from 2013 to 2017 and entitled *Victory Day*. Hence, the project hereby referred to is a “researcher-created” or “researcher-initiated” production of visual data (Ball & Gilligan, 2010; Pauwels, 2010). The footage was taken mostly in the street or in public buildings. As Raulin et al. have argued, at the moment when we take shots of actors of street performances “what reciprocity did we establish with them? Furthermore, what did we show, what was the part of interpretation through the photographer’s eye? What social or ethnic invisibility were we entitled to denounce, what to make readable, how to make visible without stigmatizing?” (2016, p. 71).³ Bearing in mind this objective – “How to make visible without stigmatizing?” –, I would like to offer some preliminary answers with regards to the production of moving images, in particular when this production takes place in marginal places and involves the participation of persons who have experienced immigration.

The first section of the chapter will address the national context of the filmmaking, Israel, and its implication for the planning of the film. The second section will describe more in detail the conditions of the shooting, and the “sensory experiences” recorded and collected. Moreover, in this section and the one that follows, I hope to show that the use of the camera helped to grasp the complexity of the participants’ experiences, the way they interact with one another within the place they inhabit, in a deeper way than traditional collection methods would have permitted. The fourth section focuses on the editing and montage process, and the choices I have made to tell the stories I recorded. Notably, I will address the shortcomings of *Victory Day* to introduce the larger context to an audience unfamiliar with Israeli periphery and with its immigrant residents. The last section describes the reactions of the participants, as well as the reactions of a broader academic audience when the film was screened.

With this piece, I hope to contribute to several points this book wishes to address. As a matter of fact, the chapter provides a reflection on the use of film to capture political actions, specifically the ones targeting immigrant groups. Secondly, it

²I published a piece in the francophone journal *e-migrinter* in September 2019 on similar thoughts. However, this chapter is not a translation of this piece.

³Author’s translation. The original quote is: “Dès lors, quelle réciprocité instaurer avec ces acteurs de *street performance*? En outre, que donnait-on à voir, quelle était la part de l’interprétation par le regard du photographe? Quelle invisibilité sociale ou ethnique était-on en droit de dénoncer, que rendre lisible, comment rendre visible sans stigmatiser?” (Raulin et al., 2016, p. 71)

shows the extent to which filmmaking relates to experiences of the participants involved, and to the sensorial experience of a place. With this, it builds on previous works that have highlighted the potential of moving images to represent the sensory, experiences and intersubjectivities (including Rouch, 1978; Gibson, 1979; MacDougall, 1998; Pink, 2009; Ferrarini, 2017). Thirdly, it tackles the ethics of working in conflict cities, and even more specifically, when participants take a hawkish stand in that conflict.

4.2 Filming in Israel

For scholars working in places where migrations represent a substantial or disruptive social phenomenon, or working in places enduring conflict or violence, the production of moving images usually takes place in a visually overcrowded space and raises constant ethical questions. As a point of fact, how could I avoid participating in the “spectacle” of migration (De Genova, 2013; Debord, 1967), or of the conflict that took place in Israel and Palestine? I had to engage with a reflexive process to overcome this issue and produce images diligently.

A first solution was to inquire outside of the large urban centers of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. In the project I undertook at the time, I meant to conduct research in “ordinary cities” (Robinson, 2006), which meant to acknowledge the relevance of smaller cities, located outside of political, economic and socio-cultural networks, when conducting research. This had implications for the shooting of a film, and I aimed at producing images in a place that was usually invisible, and where media production was marginal. The film was thought to convey sensory experiences, in order to render the invisible seen and heard. Even if my intention was to distance myself from mainstream media, engaging with participants with a camera bore some risks. In fact, the city I set the film in, Kiryat Shmona, is not completely marginal in the media. Because of its geographical location, some kilometres away from the Lebanese and Syrian borders, revived tensions can strongly disrupt the ordinary. As I have mentioned elsewhere, “the particularity of life at the frontier has been recuperated, notably by *Mizrahi* social movements initiated by the African and Asian immigrants directed to the periphery from the 1950s, and more largely by the Israeli right. In fact, “Israeli politicians and media further create a sense of threat, intensifying the sense of living on an exposed frontier“ (Thorleifsson 2013)” (Desille, 2018, p. 448). More recently, Kiryat Shmona residents themselves have been reinvesting their collective narrative, as illustrated by the grassroots project “Memories” and the project to establish a national museum. Even though Kiryat Shmona does not always fit what the term “ordinary” could imply, it still represented a secondary urban center, an “everyday-life place” (Schnell & Mishal, 2008), where I could study the extent to which migration structures the place.

A second dimension of my reflection concerned the people and their actions. Equipped with a camera rather than a recording device, I could capture bodies, gestures, non-oral data and material data not only on a place but also on the people that inhabited it. The recording of non-oral discourses there relates to a turn in social

sciences, where the sensory (Pink, 2006) becomes a substantial concern. The camera enables the recording of sensory experiences; the montage, to represent it; and the screening, to invoke the senses among viewers. Additionally, and I will develop this idea more in detail in the next section, the researcher also takes part in this sensory experience. As Pink argues: “ethnography is a reflexive and experiential process through which understanding, knowing and (academic) knowledge are produced” (2009). She adds that the various works produced around senses and social sciences “draw our attention to the corporeality and multisensoriality of any social encounter or interaction – including not only the relationships between research participants but those between ethnographer and research participants” (ibid). In short, the filming process enables to act, record, represent and invoke this level of sensory experiences, through interactions between individuals (including the filming researcher and the filmed participants). In that sense, I adopted an “observational style”. Observational – including direct and *vérité* – filmmaking has been the style of predilection of David MacDougall and Jean Rouch (MacDougall, 1998; Rouch, 1978). It focuses mainly on the subjective lives of the filmed subjects, and entails a reflexive approach by the filmmakers, which I will come back to in the section below.

In order to seize these experiences, I asked permission to film the person who would become the main character: Dr. B., an immigrant from Russia, deputy mayor of the city and in charge of immigration-related matters. We agreed upon my participation in two events. I later understood these specific time-space events, involving cultural mechanisms (e.g. ceremonies or rituals) as “vignettes” illustrating the relation between society and space, and aimed at recording how relations establish and unfold at this specific time, in this specific place. Thus, I was concerned about where and with whom the events I chose to shoot would take place. The first event was the organization of the national elections in Kiryat Shmona in March 2015, where Dr. B. was running the campaign for the national party he is a member of; and the second, the organization of the commemoration of the Second World War, in May 2015, in which he takes an active role.

A last remark I wish to make before turning to the filming itself, is that of the plot. As a matter of fact, ethnographic filmmaking, if it cannot be entirely “directed”, does entail planning. In the process of imagining a scenario, I believe that, more than planning the scenes I could shoot, I mainly set rules for myself. I decided not to orally intervene, or I might say, direct, during the shooting (although in the following section, I acknowledge that my presence itself generates forms of direction). I chose to follow the main character where he goes and film interactions when they happened. This was clearly different from the in-depth encounters I organized before with Dr. B.: I did not have questions prepared to guide the conversation and he did not have lines prepared. In fact, “[w]ith film, you have to shoot events and activities at the time they occur. If you don’t catch them then, they’re lost forever” (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p. 3). A rather different situation occurred during classic interviews, where the stories are told *a posteriori*, and are already given coherence by the participant (Delory-Momberger, 2010; Ferrarotti, 2005).

The following section therefore addresses more in depth what happened during the shooting process. (Figs. 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8)



Fig. 4.1 Screenshot of the film *Victory Day* (Desille, 2015). The municipality of Kiryat Shmona, a city in northern Israel, organizes a memorial day for the 70th anniversary of the Victory of the Allies of WWII. At this occasion, Russian-speaking war veterans are gathering together



Fig. 4.2 Screenshot of the film *Victory Day* (Desille, 2015). On national elections' day, the deputy mayor of Kiryat Shmona, organizes the local campaign for the party he supports, Israel Beitenu. Here in the local office of the party



Fig. 4.3 Screenshot of the film Victory Day (Desille, 2015). Here close to a poll station

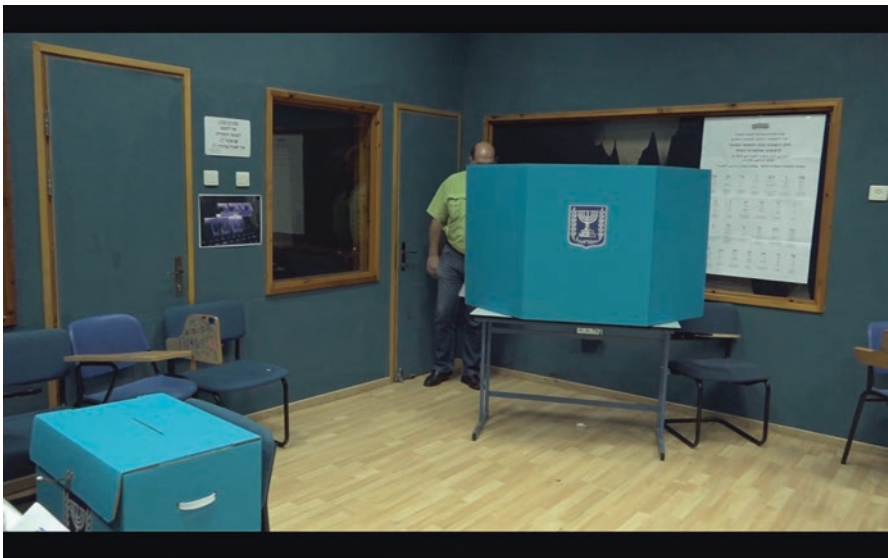
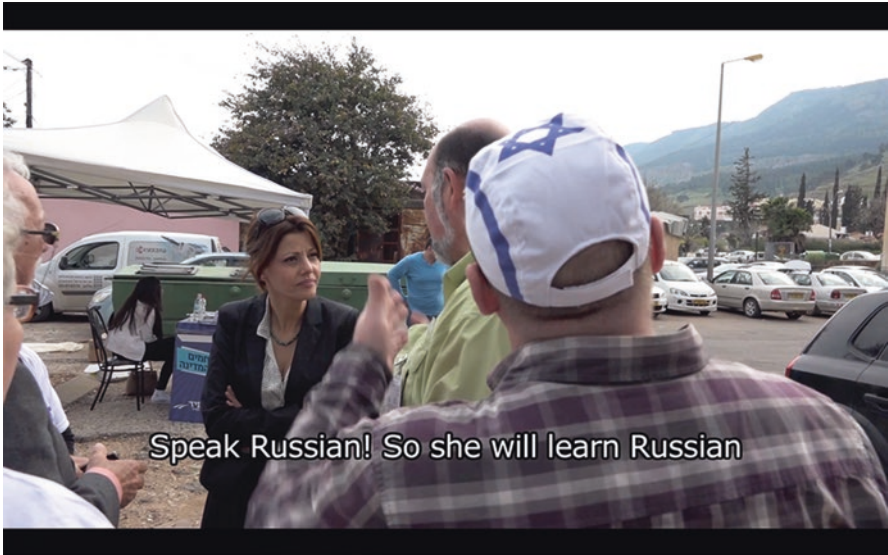


Fig. 4.4 Screenshot of the film Victory Day (Desille, 2015). Here he checks that everything is organized properly at a poll station



Figs. 4.5 and 4.6 Screenshots of the film *Victory Day* (Desille, 2015). MP Orly Levy-Abukassis is meeting with the residents of Kiryat Shmona



Fig. 4.7 Screenshot of the film Victory Day (Desille, 2015). Here the deputy mayor speaks with young residents about M. Putin’s politics



Fig. 4.8 Screenshot of the film Victory Day (Desille, 2015). Here he checks the first estimates of the results in the evening

4.3 Reducing the Distance?

As mentioned in the introduction, the equipment available to researchers has become much more accessible and user friendly. However, I rented a semi-professional camera to make sure that the result will be neat and easy to edit. This “professional look” actually helped me circulating with Dr. B. As for recording the sound, I equipped Dr. B. with a neck mic, which allowed me to record all conversations and to receive his implicit authorization. Indeed, with the micro attached to his shirt, there was a tacit agreement that I would hear everything. Ball (2014), among others, has fruitfully engaged with the notion of informed consent. While this quote relates to photographs, I still believe that the neck mic played the role of the “pose”:

While some photographers claim to eschew posing by subjects in their work; similarly to those social scientists aiming to uncover meaning through consent, others have pointed to the valuable role that offering the subject the opportunity to pose for a photograph can give to the overall meaning of an image. (Ball, 2014, p. 156)

The presence of the camera also provided me with an agreement from residents present around the scenes. Becker assures that “It is probably easier to be unobtrusive in public places where you are not known as an investigator and it may or may not be easier if you are carrying a camera. In many situations carrying a camera validates your right to be there; as a tourist, as a member of the group recording the scene for their purposes, or as a representative of the media” (Becker, 1974, p. 18).

My presence with the camera in hand took a different dimension than in previous encounters. “Recent discussions of phenomenological ethnography (Katz & Csordas 2003) also insist that embodiment is “the common ground for recognition of the other’s humanity and the immediacy of intersubjectivity” where the body becomes the ethnographer’s research instrument (2003: 278)” (Pink, 2006, p. 46). This was brought forward by Jean Rouch, for whom cine-trance meant a triangular relation between the one filming, the camera and the ones filmed. The filmmaker, he assures, is not himself, but a mechanic eye and an electronic ear (Rouch, 1978). Rouch has not reduced the filmmaker to an absent body. On the very contrary, most of his work attempted at making the filmmaker and the filmmaking process visible to the audience. The one behind the camera and the camera itself, together, have an impact on the filmed event. What is interesting though, is that this triangular relation means that filming becomes an embodied, involved and participating experience (de Hasque, 2014). Jean-Frédéric de Hasque even coins the “dance metaphor”, where the filming body, while accompanying every move of its filmed characters, “dance” with them (ibid).

Placed behind the camera, I started recording the multiple interactions created by every encounter between Dr. B. and other residents, supporters, opponents and colleagues. Dr. B. led me to them: he walks close by, stops to talk to people, aware that

I record. Sometimes, the persons he meets on the way ask me to “take their picture”, showing that they too acknowledge my presence. Through this multiplication of interactions, I started identifying the various characters that Dr. B. embodies. Seven functions, at least, were activated during the shooting. Dr. B. is an official, the deputy mayor (i) at the municipality of Kiryat Shmona. But he is also a member of the *Israel Beitenu* party (ii), for which he campaigns that day. With this hat, he is sometimes the head of the local bureau (iii), in competition with other party supporters, or a subaltern to other members (iv), such as MP Orly Levy Abukassis who visited Kiryat Shmona on the day of the elections. Dr. B. is also a former emergency room physician (v), and a neighbor, and he acts as such in encounters with residents. During the second shooting, Dr. B. is alternatively a conveyor (vi), facilitating community activities of the FSU group present in Kiryat Shmona; and a gatekeeper (vii) between this Russian-speaking group and the other officials of the municipality. He sometimes translates, sometimes shortens, and other times filters conversations altogether.

In the background of those scenes, the place also materializes. While we navigated into the schools (see Figs. 4.3 and 4.4), the streets, the closed restaurant where the local *Israel Beitenu* office was (see Figs. 4.2 and 4.8), the municipal conference room, the memorial square (see Fig. 4.1), I shot images of a city that, if present somehow in narratives, is usually visually absent. Kiryat Shmona belongs to the “new town” movement (Achouch & Morvan, 2013; Lipshitz, 1991; Tzfadia, 2006). As the more ancient Palestinian historical core has been erased, it is a collection of residential buildings, with one of the highest percentages of public housing (Hananel, 2017) in Israel, built depending of the migration waves and the budgets allocated. These buildings are also appropriated by the residents, who often add balconies and extensions without permission. But the main interest of following him with a camera was to capture moments where he thought he was “not seen”, or moments that he perceived as belonging to uninteresting shots. As such, in between the discourses he performed, with the different functions he executed, I could grasp the tiredness, doubts, and waiting time (see Fig. 4.8). Those informed even more acutely on his take on this campaign. After reading the preliminary results of the votes, Dr. B. ended this Election Day by saying out loud that he would not campaign next time, putting words to the signs of frustration I had seen during the day.

4.4 ...or Maintaining the Distance and Refusing to “Go Native”?

Dr. B. is a member of the national party *Israel Beitenu*. Established as an immigrant party, representing the large Russian speaking immigrant group who immigrated in Israel in the 1970s, and to a larger extent in the 1990s, *Israel Beitenu* adopted a far-right, hawkish ideology. The nationalist racist ideology transpired during the shooting. Two scenes in particular clearly illustrate this stance. On the day of the election,

a group of youngsters sit close to the party's tent, next to a polling station. Dr. B. calls them out loud and they come forward. They start commenting on their votes and Dr. B. shows his disapproval, since they haven't voted for *Israel Beitenu*. One asks him who would the secretary of the party M. Lieberman support, the left or the right? Dr. B. answers that M. Lieberman would support M. Putin. They laugh, and argue that it is good, since M. Putin would simply take the left down (see Fig. 4.7). Dr. B. continues: "Putin is crazy. With all the ammunition he has, he could just destroy the Arab villages around, which is really all we need". The youngsters laughed uneasily and Dr. B. turned towards me to check out if I had recorded him. However, he did not ask to lower the camera. A second scene, less obvious in its racist character, but still nationalistic, took place during the second shoot, in May 2015. In front of a small group of second World War veterans, the mayor of Kiryat Shmona, translated to Russian by Dr. B., makes a speech where he praises the actions of the veterans. He assures that their role in the victory against Nazism is actually fundamental to the establishment of Israel as a haven for Jews, and therefore, he replaces the commemoration in the broader context of Israeli nationalism. At a local level, *Israel Beitenu* members contribute to another form of racialization and communitarianism by feeding the *Ashkenazi/Mizrahi* divide⁴ at work in Israel. Kiryat Shmona was established in 1949 as a transit camp and since then most of its inhabitants have been Jewish immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East.⁵ The first opening provided by the USSR in the 1970s led to the emigration of around 350,000 Soviet Jews to Israel, many of them settling in cities such as Kiryat Shmona. But post-1989 850,000 Former Soviet Union immigrants changed the demographic composition of Kiryat Shmona even more. As of 2015, 16% of city residents were 1990s FSU immigrants. During shooting, I often recorded residents broadly (and reductively) call each other "the Russians" and "the Moroccans". This reductive approach was even clearer with the visit of MP Levy Abukassis. Herself the daughter of a prominent Moroccan-Israeli politician, she is identified as a *Mizrahi* representative, and her membership in a traditionally Russian-speaking party is misunderstood both by *Israel Beitenu* members who cannot communicate with her in Russian and by residents of Kiryat Shmona who think she should be in a party that identifies with the *Mizrahi* struggle (see Figs. 4.5 and 4.6). The visit of MP Levy Abukassis illustrated strongly the tension generated by the shift towards a centre/periphery ideology put in place by *Israel Beitenu*, and more generally, the persistence of intercommunity racism in Israel.

In this context, how should I carry out an inquiry when I cannot "go native"? Research conducted on xenophobic (Avanza, 2008) or partisan parties (Grills, 1998) presents a risk for research. In short, reducing the distance to better inquire the

⁴*Ashkenazi* is a term used to qualify Jews from Europe. *Mizrahi*, which means Easterner in Hebrew, has been constructed from the 1970s in Israel to include Jews from North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. It is a politico-cultural category that has enabled the formation of political parties and socio-cultural movements.

⁵European Jews from Poland, Hungary and Romania also established in Kiryat Shmona but were more prompt to re-migrate to regions that offered better prospects (Beenstock, 1996).

everyday lives of members of *Israel Beitenu* holds the risk of voicing their ideas. However, being very straightforward about the opposite political stance I was taking, and showing disapproval, would risk restricting access (Cefai & Amiraux, 2002). As Becker suggests: “If the observer gives evidence that these will not be used to harm the people he is observing, they may decide to ignore him, or to cooperate [...]”. When I asked Dr. B. if I could film, he asked me if I could wear the t-shirt with the party symbol. I chose to honestly tell Dr. B. I did not support the party at all. And he chose not to see me as a threat, and allowed me to film, without wearing any sign of support.

Nevertheless, while shooting, I felt that the camera provided me with a “shield”, a materialized protection to maintain distance, and enable the recording of moments that generated discomfort at best, or sometimes even blunt disapproval. As a point of fact, contrarily to interviews, where narratives are already given coherence, or observations, where coherence is given later in the field diary, the task of the visual ethnographer is to synthesize at the moment of filming (Barbash & Taylor, 1997). I had to react promptly to capture scenes, without any possibility to go through an ethical evaluation!

The tension between the establishment of a proximity or a distance, both enabled by the use of a camera, is part of the crosscutting issues addressed in visual methodologies. As a matter of fact, bringing a camera with me both permitted me to negotiate entry in spaces, when only shadowing Dr. B. would not have been seen as a sufficient reason for him and other participants. It also allowed me to conceal my reactions and body language in situations of disapproval. In that sense, it changes my positionality and enables to negotiate new sets of intersubjectivities at the moment of filming.

Once the scenes are recorded, another set of questions arise, since it was now possible to take the time of editing and doing montage. I still refused to contribute to hawkish voices in a conflict arena, nor to the divide, or to ordinary racism. But I did not want to simplify Dr. B. to these events and produce a film which outcome would be parodic.

4.5 Editing and Montage: Knowledge Capital and Storytelling

At the time of planning the film, I intended to use the movie as an object to provoke conversations during encounters. The film was meant to be screened among Israelis, who knew Kiryat Shmona, its location and the challenges it faced as a periphery and a frontier city. Screening the film was meant to be a trigger to address issues of immigration, the representation of immigrants, immigrant leadership and community politics.

In that sense, I expected my audience to have enough “knowledge capital” to understand the whereabouts of the film. But while editing, I could slowly discern that I faced an accumulation of cultural references: those of the residents, of Dr. B.,

of mine (since, as Pink [2013] argues, the researcher herself brings in her own references when filming) and those of a wider non-Israeli audience. How could I take into account these differences in the knowledge the viewers will have of the city, the party and the characters?

Montage and editing were done during a workshop animated by a professor in visual anthropology, a filmmaker, and a professional editor, in which 9 other early-career researchers participated. The construction of the story was therefore done with the support and regular feedback of this “expert group”: a first selection of scenes permitted to trigger a debate about the message conveyed in the film; the rough-cut was screened and triggered new discussions about the intelligibility of the various scenes, individually and together; and the editor helped with the final edition of the film. As Olivier de Sardan (1994) has argued in his piece “the ethnographic pact”, an ethnographic film follows the following conventions: Firstly, the viewers believe that the events filmed are truthful, and that the images are “real” as they tacitly accept to forget the interpretation made while framing, making the montage and editing. Even if the images were manipulated, they keep some traces of the referential reality. Secondly, the technique aims at credibility. *Victory Day* respects the criteria of a slow montage, the absence of sound illusion. And thirdly, the film enables the viewer to access the representations’ world of the filmed. The film is a “window on the world” and gives the viewers the feeling that they could not access this knowledge as simple tourists (ibid).

The scene selection aimed at building a story, following a classic narrative arch: the exposition corresponded to the ceremony commemorating the victory of the allies in 1945 (see Fig. 4.1). Although it was contrary to the chronology of the film shooting, the commemoration allowed a snapshot of the Russian-speaking community to be shown through a “vignette”, a moment in time and in space. The import of the ceremony from the Soviet Union to Israel and the adaptation of this ceremony to the new context holds a symbolic dimension. The first scene shows children who grew up in Israel and who sing an old Russian song, adapted partly in Hebrew. They face a group of war veterans, most of them of old age, surrounding Dr. B (see Fig. 4.1). The perturbation comes when Election Day starts. The story then moves to a set of encounters between Dr. B. and residents, where a climax is reached with the visit of MP. Levy Abukassis. The story ends when the results are published in the media. Gathered at the small restaurant that serves as headquarters, Dr. B., encircled by the disappointed supporters, discovers the results of the votes and swears to stop campaigning. Images and language are established modes to represent sensory experiences (Pink, 2006, p. 58). I could rely on the power of images to describe situations. Once the scenes were selected, I had to add subtitles to the Hebrew and Russian dialogues. I had to make choices and lost certain dialogues, because of superposition. At some point, a heated debate on the inability of MP. Levy Abukassis to speak Russian becomes audible only for Russian and Hebrew speakers, while the English subtitles could support only a certain part of the debate.

After a screening at an international conference, which I will describe in the section below, I added two lines of titles – one at the beginning to explain what the commemorations were about, and one before we enter the headquarters where the campaign gets prepared, to introduce Dr. B.

4.6 Screening and Feedback: Shortcomings of *Victory Day*

Planning, shooting and editing the film aim toward one particular moment: that of the screening to an audience. In her quest for sensory experiences, Pink comes back to this moment:

Other anthropologists have theorised the question of ethnographic film audiences and the senses by analysing Jean Rouch's films to suggest that film evokes knowledge through the viewer's own sensory experience. Stoller borrows Artaud's concept of a 'Theatre of Cruelty' whereby 'the filmmaker's goal is not to recount per se, but to present an array of unsettling images that seek to transform the audience psychologically and politically'. Defining Rouch's ethnographic films as a 'cinema of cruelty' Stoller reminds us how cinema's 'culturally coded images can at the same time trigger anger, shame, sexual excitement, revulsion, and horror' (1997: 125). (Pink, 2006, p. 52)

As a matter of fact, showing an immigrant local politician campaigning for a far-right party in Israel through moving images first aimed to trigger a debate with the interviewees. On the one hand, this was a way for me to control for participation and ethics. During the research, I made a point of reporting to the municipalities where I worked on the various activities I carried out, including the film, in order to show my gratitude to the time and energy that participants spared me, but also to elude any misunderstanding regarding my interpretation of events occurring in the city. On the other hand, it held the risk, if the actors were unhappy about the result, of being manipulated⁶ (see for instance Olivier de Sardan, 1995; Jerome, 2008). I showed the film to Dr. B., in his office. Some weeks later, we saw it again with the mayor. The moment we saw the movie with the mayor and Dr. B. is worth mentioning. In fact, I was invited on a morning during the weekend when the office was empty. This might be a way to make sure that the outcome was not problematic. During both encounters, the film proved to be a tool to provoke a conversation, although not necessarily on the topics I expected. Both Dr. B. and the mayor check if they are photogenic and find the scenes "trivial": they affirm it is the same at every election. But while the film moves on, they both spent time telling me who is who, and what they do in the city. They comment on the scenes and the mayor gently frowns at Dr. B. for moments he finds politically incorrect.

After the screening, they discuss the question of relations between groups. But I observe a re-centering towards an institutional discourse. The film proved disruptive for a short moment only. The mayor recalls the solidarity that animated the residents of Kiryat Shmona in the 1990s and describes activities carried out at the time. Dr. B. usually so critical of the lack of policy at the municipal level, finally agrees with the mayor that immigration settlement meets with solidarity and support from the local community. I was surprised but, later on, I realized how much the moving

⁶Olivier de Sardan argues that because of a relation with specific actors, the others would believe that the researcher is part of a clique, of a specific local group (1995). In turn, Jerome (2008) highlights that the persons that volunteer to participate in the research are a specific group. In Jerome's research, they correspond to activists, who believe in the mediatisation of knowledge. Therefore, they have a positive bias towards the research, and accept the presence of the researcher on the ground that he or she will be instrumental to their objectives.

images enabled me, at least for some hours, to distance myself from this institutional discourse that was at work within the institution. Confronting the different materials – interviewees, observations, and film – proved a great tool for comparison.

Once I received authorization from Dr. B. to show the film in academic circles,⁷ I showed the movie at a conference organized at Deusto University in Bilbao in July 2016. The film was part of a larger collection of students' productions. Following the screening, there were no questions or comments from the audience. Some comments made to me in private expressed the discomfort experienced by the audience. The ethno-national ideology at work triggered negative reactions, somewhat very normal! The second time it was screened was in a panel at the International Visual Sociology Association conference in Evry (France) in June 2018. At that occasion, I presented the movie together with a paper. This experience was much more positive. I got feedback from the audience and there was a real interest when I presented the movie as a data set. I also got time to explain the method and the learnings.

As Rose (2003) has suggested, it is not only the images but also the audience and the space of the "lecture theatre" that attention ought to be paid to. Maybe I felt more comfortable when making my opposition to the party more vocal and making sure the audience understood the objectives of the work. But this also showed the limitations of this film. I agree with the claim that ethnographic films are forms of publication. They are both a process of investigation and a product (Ruby, 2010). *Victory Day* has the ambition to be a pictorial expression of the knowledge I acquired while filming. Nevertheless, as I hope to evolve with my practice, I wish to integrate further concerns of reflexivity – not only in writing, a function this chapter has, but also in the images.

4.7 Conclusion

With this piece, I attempt to answer the question: how to make visible without stigmatizing? A first step was to carefully set the rules I aimed at following when realizing the film. Based on the methodology I adopted for the broader PhD project I carried out, I decided to focus on a less visible place and to follow the main character, adapting to this visual exercise the principles of the biographical method. I filmed with minimum oral interventions and focused on encounters with other residents, as well as moments of preparation, waiting, walking from a poll to the other and so on. At the time of editing, and with the support of peers and professionals, I aimed at exploiting the power of images and sounds to tell a story that would make sense even for persons that are not acquainted with Israeli politics.

⁷In the framework of my doctoral research project, I have received consent from Dr. B. to record interviews, shoot the film and use both audio and visual bits in and out of academic circles. However, since the film begins with images of children, I have decided not to display these images outside of academia, and without my presence. The screenshots selected here are of consenting adults only, including Dr. B.

The interest of harnessing visual methods lies in giving a voice and making visible a group that is usually unknown. In that sense, it does fulfill questions of reciprocity, less explicit with traditional research methods. When it comes to issues linked to working in situations of political tensions, coming with a camera enables accessing different dimensions of the field while at the same time, using it as a shield when ideological distancing was crucial.

Capturing sensory experiences became more obvious at the moment of screening. Here, the value of the film – which equates a publication – is measured. In fact, it is not only about recorded images of places and people in the field, but about the narrative power of the visual production. For the audience, the senses are also invoked. Reactions of unease, discomfort, anger are part of what images can do to us. The use of visual methods differs from a text which can be ignored more easily. Understanding what is at stake in local politics in a frontier town such as Kiryat Shmona and understanding the tensions between the different groups is important to grasp a fuller picture of the regional politics, and particularly of the conflict.

However, this first exercise came with its limitations. Mostly, being engrossed in my PhD project, it was hard to step back and plan contextual images which could fill the knowledge gap for a less informed audience. As a matter of fact, the less visible the place, the less vocal the group, the less we know and can read between the lines. How can you create a story while avoiding the intrusion of expert voices (either as voice over, or as bits of interviews to present the problem)? A second question which in my opinion deserves further exploration is related to the inclusion of questions of reflexivity within the film, and not only in commentaries made in a written form after the edition is finalized. Thirdly, this film is also one of an outsider and it was a one-person project. The collaboration of the participants was during the shooting, while most of the editing was done by myself. Other chapters of this volume have opted for more participatory post-production processes (see Trencsényi & Naumescu, Piemontese, MacQuarie, chaps. 7, 10 and 16, in this volume), which seems crucial for future projects.

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Chapter 5

Conclusions: Touching and Being Touched – Experience and Ethical Relations



Lars Frers

Sometimes, research can hit you in the stomach, making you angry and upset, possibly sick. With a bit of luck, this can be fine, as discontentment can be a force that propels you to become active and engage yourself. Sometimes, research can resonate in your heart, making you aware and empathetic. Not much luck is needed in these cases, as this will hopefully also stimulate you to get new ideas, a better understanding or hopefully even give you a better foothold for whatever you do in practice. Most of the time, research just passes you by, not leaving much of an impression. We do know that words can make a difference, that words can touch you. They evoke many different thoughts and emotions. It is not a single word alone that does this, it is the flow and rhythm of a text, how it takes the reader along, cognitively but also in space and time and in an embodied manner. To achieve different effects, we place words differently, we craft sentences that appeal to different senses and sensibilities, we use terms or jargon, we write complex sentences that juxtapose hosts of different qualities, as Michel Serres does in in *The Five Senses* (2008). We present a clear definition, we unfold arguments or put something to the point. Most of the word work we do, we do on our keyboards, sitting at a desk, in a train carriage or lying on a sofa. Thus, this word work happens remote from the site where our study took place, it is definitely not the same as the field work that we do, it is not the same as the numbers and algorithms that make up our data. But done well, it can still evoke the sense of what happens or happened “out there” in the field, the phenomena that the numbers point to, be they the numbers of people crossing a border or the feeling of someone who is lost or maybe even hunted (Guttorm, 2016).

This text, however, deals not with words but with images, both hand drawn images and those “taken” by a camera, static images but also moving pictures in film recordings. Images also evoke feelings, they can touch the person looking at

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them, studying them. In the following text, I will try to engage with different qualities of how using visual approaches touches all of those involved in different ways. This touching and being touched by the visual happens in ways that are different from the textual, but the focus will lie on the visual and comparisons to text serve mainly heuristic purposes. As I wrote above, word work happens mostly on the keyboard, remote from where our data originates. This is quite different from most of the visual work that is done by the contributors to this section that I want to comment on to develop my argument in this chapter – their visual work is deeply embedded in their respective fields or their studies. Because of that, I want to divide my approach into three different steps. The first enters the production arena of the visual material, the second revolves around analysis and the third step goes back to the keyboard and screen, examining issues of presentation and representation of the visual. Springing forth from these steps is the final part of this chapter, which will focus on the notion of how an “ethics in motion” plays itself out in the studies and in the form they are published here.

5.1 Production

Both the photographs and film stills do a work of *emplacement*. They tell us about the actual places in which particular people move about and execute practices that are relevant to the researchers. In the case of the presence of Norwegian Turks in Drammen, Norway, and in the Turkish province (Nikielska-Sekula, Chap. 2, in this volume), this work is more focused on the places as such, in most cases voiding the places of people and instead focusing the view on architectures, things and spatio-material assemblages that are co-established by migrants in both places (and nations) in different and significant ways. When reading the text along with the pictures, it becomes apparent that quite a lot of work and attention has gone into exactly that: keeping the images free of people, while at the same time providing visual access to everyday places. Places where real people follow their mundane, but also special or religious activities. The film stills do similar work, they also show places, but they do not focus on the places as such (even though similar information or data about place could be extracted from the stills), but they focus on places as situations for the main protagonist in the film. Dr. B. is always there (Desille, Chaps. 1 and 4, in this volume). The places that are documented here are places that situate the protagonist and the camera woman in his and her practice in and around the election. They show different aspects of how and where he is active and how Desille has positioned herself in relation to him, co-present others and the places where they move about.

Another important aspect of the images that are used in the chapters by Nikielska-Sekula and Desille is that they have been recorded at the *eye-height* of a normal adult, thus showing a normalized view of the surroundings, i.e. one that is not taken from a wheelchair or child-level, nor from angles or in perspectives that would only be accessible with the help of larger camera mounts, from the ceiling etc. This also

provides insight into the production of the visual material as happening in a non-exceptional, not overly technical setting. The camera and the person wielding it will still be visible, and Desille is also highlighting the fact that she used a larger, more professional camera to establish her position as an actual camera-person, but the recording or production setting is not re-ordering the space of recording in a physically significant manner, thus organizing the view of the camera as being human, rather than technical.

The cameras and the visual that are presented here are also *close, but distant at the same time*. They are with and among things, but also keeping their distance. We don't see detailed or close-up shots of either people or things. The fine-grained nature of surfaces, dirt and matter lingers in details that are not easily discerned in the photographs or stills, so that traces of human usage have to be found in the larger settings, with the possible exception of the tagging on a metal door (Nikielska-Sekula, Fig. 2.1).

The pictures in combination with the text thus display something about their production (Mondada, 2009), they give us insights into what distances the photographer or camera-woman has found acceptable, how close she moved to people, to single things or objects and what distance she kept. The one person that we can see up front in Nikielska-Sekula's chapter (Fig. 2.5) is far away, unrecognisable at least to us, who don't know the street and the people living there and who uses the bus stop, while the three children are faceless, moving away from the onlooker. Taken together, this kind of physical distance and material absence in Nikielska-Sekula's chapter also creates a sense of distance and an experience of absence (Frers, 2013). When read in conjunction with her text, this can evoke a strong feeling of how the researcher related herself to the field, thus resonating with the strong stance that she takes on ethical issues, avoiding risks and paying attention to issues of anonymity in particular. This is in strong contrast to the closeness to Dr. B. in the chapter by Desille. This person, still somehow peculiar but also very concrete and physically present, features prominently in the visuals presented by her. Again, the text read in conjunction with the images gives us cues as to how to see these stills, how to tune into them and listen to what they can tell us. Many situations that are depicted show a certain intimacy in the fact that Dr. B. is seemingly quite aloof of Desille's presence. But as her text clearly displays, this apparent intimacy is the result of a *constant negotiation of distances* between the two of them and co-present others, where her emotion works along with the use of the camera "as a shield" allows managing this closeness – but not without struggles. This is also relevant for Dr. B. as in the instance where Desille describes how he checks up on her being there when they record different events, either ones that he definitely wants to have documented or events where he displays awareness of the potential troubles connected to them. These constant negotiations show one thing quite clearly for both chapters: while the camera's presence might recede into the background of the interactions, it always lingers there, at the margins, and can in one instance be summoned back as a relevant part of the interaction. Thus, it quite clearly never is "forgotten" as such, but it is not always actively attended to.

The photos and video stills in the chapters by Desille and Nikielska-Sekula always carry with them an *excess of information and impressions*. This is an important aspect of photographs in general, as explored by Helen Liggett (2007). They show more than can be attended to in the text and also in their production – these are not carefully arranged studio settings, but mundane spaces that always are filled and crisscrossed by many different layers of agents and activities. One could surmise that the opposite is true for the drawings or maps generated by the participants in Buhr’s (Chap. 3, in this volume) study. The hand-drawn mental maps are *radical simplifications and abstractions* (Hendrickson, 2008; McGuirk, 2013). Here, migrant bodies as such stay out of the picture. They are recuperated and raised in the narratives or the interactions surrounding the production of the maps. In addition, the levels of abstraction enacted in the maps are quite different, as the author also makes evident. While some participants draw a symbolic house (we don’t know in how far this actually is a representation of the kind of building where the participant lives, or if this should just symbolize home, and the actual dwelling could be an apartment in a larger condominium), another participant draws spaces that depict whole city quarters and the routes that connect them. How do we get access to migrant bodies in or through these abstract figures? This question is central to Buhr’s argument about the necessity of interactions between the researcher and the participants that draw the maps. Both work out what these mean and where the participants are, also in an embodied way, “in” these drawings. The production of the visuals is central to their interpretation and understanding.

Again, the act of production happens in relation between researcher and co-present and absent others. It is quite obvious that in all three examples, even though they operate in very different material and technological settings, what we see, what is generated is the product of active and ongoing negotiations in the field.

5.2 Analysis

The negotiations do, however, not stop after leaving the field. I want to first focus on one usually neglected aspect of the research process that happens “after” the field, in the ordering, thinking through, reassembling and analysis of the material or data that has been produced before. When I closely observe myself during the ordering or analysis of my material, it becomes quite apparent that the field and the production of data has not only happened outside of myself. It also has happened inside me. The relationality of the production of data means that it leaves traces, lines, roots, hooks etc. in us, in our thoughts and in our embodied emotions. These find a way into our writing if we attend to them, as Caitlin DeSilvey (2006) demonstrates when she engages with her experiences at a decaying cottage. *Data also are embodied memories*. We do not suddenly shift to a completely different register, even though we might set agencies into motion that are new and different, such as qualitative data analysis software, logs, conversation with others either in random meetings in a floor or over lunch or in a well-organized data session. In all of these new

and different circumstances, memories and images continue to linger in us, we might be haunted by something we did, we might be proud of it, we might suddenly realize what something that we or others did actually meant. The past, the production of data and our inter- and intra-actions during that time do not just disappear. We experience encounters anew, partly rooted in our embodied memories and partly in what we currently see and do with the stuff of our research, in these cases especially with their visual qualities.

This aspect can also be discerned quite clearly in the accounts given in all three chapters. While the stay in the field may be long over, we re-enact it during our analysis, sometimes only in a fleeting manner, which does not touch us a lot, but sometimes in a manner that weighs heavy on us, accompanies us to when we look out of a window in an office, on a train or an aeroplane, when we lie down in bed and think and ask and worry, and probably even in our sleep.

The same is true when one thinks of the material that has been produced. This is *the secret life of our data* (Amoore, 2018; Bucher, 2016; Thatcher, O’Sullivan, & Mahmoudi, 2016). We store our images on a hard disk, on a card, in the cloud. We put away the papers on which people drew a part of their life, we photograph and scan them. What happens with them then? They become part of a different realm, of ones and zeros, incredibly stable and unchanging, but also completely malleable and perishable. A single incident could possibly erase everything that is not properly backed-up. Someone could intrude on the data, steal it, put it into different settings and circumstances, modify it or “just” read it, translate it to hash codes and put it into work in different algorithms, identifying faces and places, contributing to the manifold transformations constantly happening in the realm of big data, of surveillance, marketing, hacking, redistributing and ordering. We have some control over this, but much of this happens below the surface of attention, in a realm of its own that we not necessarily can fully control.

In both aspects that I have briefly mentioned regarding the analysis of data (there are many others, and there is a thriving literature on issues related to the analysis of different kinds of visual data, as all of the contributions to this volume show), something else happens, something that again introduces a certain excess to the data. The visuals are more than just that. More than a captured image, clip or drawing. They hook into our memories and bodies, and they are linked to algorithms and infrastructures that extend far beyond our control.

5.3 (Re)presentation

So where does the third step tread? The third step goes outside again, it creates an imprint that is then accessible, visible and readable for a more-or-less anonymous and unknown audience or readership. The visuals that have been produced and dealt with in the analysis are finally moved into a context of presentation or representation.

Many of the issues that arise in this context are related to issues discussed earlier in the text. What is presented is, of course, linked to what was recorded, drawn, produced earlier and how it was treated and (re)contextualized in the analysis. But the presentation also has a life of its own. Starting with the drawings produced for Buhr's study, we are confronted with scans of the drawings and narratives surrounding them and their production, but at least in one case, this is also accompanied by a visual move. The high level of distance and abstraction or simplification especially in one of the drawings (Fig. 3.2) seems to urge Buhr to accompany this drawing with a "regular" map, where north is up and the abstractions are laid over another layer of abstractions that readers will supposedly be more familiar with and that enable a different reading or seeing or interpretation of the drawing – the regular map, with printed names for places instead of hard-to-read hand written names. Our eyes can zip back and forth, compare the maps, pick up the color coding that is repeated as an overlay for the regular, geographic map, re-read words and names in both parts of the picture and thus think about how both the person who has drawn the map and Buhr have imagined the spatial practices of a mobile migrant body in Lisbon's urban space. We can combine two things: first, getting a sense of the person, of the way he writes and emphasizes some lines in the drawing, how quickly he makes his strokes and where he lingers, corrects or emphasizes; and second, getting a sense of geographical relations and spatial extension. These drawings are about space and spatial relations, as well as about movement. They are void of places and practices as embodied practices – we get access to these aspects through the text and the narratives developed therein.

The visuals for Desille and Nikielska-Sekula, on the other hand, are about place and embodiment as I have argued earlier in the context of production. This is also relevant in the context of representation, however. It is the places, both interior and exterior, that are presented – they give texture to the narrative and provide information and impressions that go far beyond what the text offers. The images open another "field", one that overlaps with what the words and the analysis say, but also one that goes beyond the text, that offers an excess that, as already stated earlier, cannot be captured in a meaningful way in text (Rancière, 2009). These places, as practically all everyday places, are full of complexities, and the photos we see show these places in their lived-in qualities. They are displayed with an aura of documentation rather than an aesthetics of evocation or estrangement. Even though the photos made by Nikielska-Sekula could also be gazed at as somewhat eerie images because they show *empty* places, or rather places in which people are (made) absent. In the case of Desille it is not people who are made present as absent, but it is their voices and movements. The subtitles and the aesthetics of video or film recordings contribute to the establishment of a sense that is different when compared with photographs. The viewer is confronted with frozen interactions, moments. Here, the absent voices are made present through the words that are displayed in the subtitles. We can imagine the tone, the pitch, the level of doubt or distance, of affection or aggression that vibrates through the air in the different settings – but we cannot see or hear it.

Again, the text gives essential cues as to how we can see and move into the visuals with our own thoughts, senses, imaginations. It tells us about the challenges lived through by the researcher in these situations, it tells us about what happened in these places that are depicted, what happened with those people, and in the interactions that are displayed. While we do not meet these people ourselves, we get sensory input that gives these people and places and events new and different qualities than the text. Ideally, it will give them a voice or a face of their own. If we, based on our encounter with a drawing, a photograph or a video still feel the presence of another, get touched by that other or his or her emotions, can sense the setting or situation affect us – then visual methods will have succeeded. They will not only provide “a more” but rather an encounter, the sense of being touched. This can also be achieved by words alone, but we are all different, and sometimes we get touched by the right words, but at another time, we might need an image to bridge the distance to the lifeworld of another, in these cases of migrants’ and their lives.

5.4 Ethics in Motion

While ethics may be understood as rooted in stable norms and values, they usually become relevant in living and highly complex processes, as displayed in the contributions to this volume. What is ethical, what feels and appears right to the researcher and those who participate or appear in her or his studies, is never stable (Bashir, 2018; Chung, 2020; Thummapol, Park, Jackson, & Barton, 2019). It shifts both when seen in the context of the production of data, in its analysis and when the visual or other material is presented – and it doesn’t stop there, as Desille discusses, because the presentation itself also can be performed in many highly different situations, with different audiences and different affects and connections coming into play. This is maybe the most important message: ethics are negotiated relationally in all of the different stages of a research process and this is certainly also true for visual approaches.

At the same time, we are also pushed to think about and respect general rules or principles that can be conceived as being trans-situational. Nikielska-Sekula writes:

In a context of photo-taking, however, the researcher should be aware of global as well as class differences regarding the consciousness of the consequences of a photo being taken and displayed. I believe that it is unethical to benefit from this bias to obtain more extended material. (p. 45)

What she states here is that situational differences should be seen in light of more general or even global differences and inequalities. Just because a behavior or the taking of pictures is not perceived as harmful by some groups in some situations, this should not be a free pass to lower ethical standards that might be required by others in other settings. This is, of course, a valid and important point. At the same time, it is not necessarily a given that seeing “lower” ethical standards in certain groups only is a sign of a less developed critical consciousness. Maybe there is a

certain colonial aftertaste to this notion, as different ethical standards are being hierarchized according to different degrees of enlightenment. But at the same time, this also displayed an approach that is characterized by thoroughness and care.

Desille, on the other hand, follows what could be perceived as a completely different approach. In her film, in the text, and in the film stills, we are confronted with two public figures and a number of others that are participating in the public sphere in a very classic sense: they are present in public space, where they are presenting and discussing political views and issues. The main protagonist is displayed close-up and personal. We also get to view the face and the stance of another politician of the same party in other images (Desille, Figs. 4.5, 4.6 and 4.8). Other participants are probably also visible in the rest of the film, as this is filmed from “within” the situations, even though we don’t get to see their faces in the stills. What is more than that, Desille also actively wants to give a face to the political stances that they represent. In a way, she serves us racists and misogynists in her visual material. She shields herself behind the camera, but offers us what is on the other side of the shield. Is this ethical? The motivation and the context and the positionalities and the stances of the people in her material are very different from the people that Nikielska-Sekula does (not) portray. They do not represent what is conceived of as the vulnerable side of migration, they might rather be understood as (potential) perpetrators. Their stances and values and utterances need to be critiqued. In this case, the researcher clearly is not just a distanced, objective and neutral observer. Rather, she is engaged, dancing her own dance of ethics in motion in a way that moves between her own vulnerabilities and the will to show the reality and depth of what happens in the field, all the while negotiating her relation with Dr. B. and the people he meets – both during the recording and later, in separate showings for and with him and others. As she writes:

But the main interest of following him with a camera, was to capture moments where he thought he was “not seen”, or moments that he perceived as belonging to uninteresting shots. As such, in between the discourses he performed, with the different functions he executed, I could grasp the tiredness, doubts, and waiting time (see Fig. 4.8 getting the results). Those informed even more acutely on his take on this campaign. (p. 76)

Even though we deal with a public figure, the filming is just as much interested in the “private” take, in looking beyond the façade. Again, the ethical stance displayed here is in strong contrast to what Nikielska-Sekula does in her study. At the same time, the people involved are different and they display different wishes regarding what is allowed for the researcher to record or not. To develop the thoughts on the researcher’s position and responsibilities in this field a bit further, I want to revisit the idea of different “consciousness” for different groups, individuals or cultures again, that Nikielska-Sekula raises when she argues for a strict approach. One could probably argue that a similar thing is at play when Dr. B. displays his awareness of the fact that some things are recorded that are of a highly questionable or even openly racist nature, but connected to him and his party or his party’s supporters. However, he does not ask for the recording to stop or be deleted, thus giving a

kind of implicit acknowledgment. Couldn't this just as well be explained by a specific and rather unenlightened cultural attitude, for example a kind of machismo that would keep him from showing signs of insecurity or weakness in front of a "colonial" female researcher? However, displaying machismo is different from displaying vulnerability and insecurity. Is this difference big enough to allow for such big variations in ethical approach? And, how do other stances factor into this, for example a cultural aloofness to the sharing of images, of just being a regular person with "nothing to hide", living in a regular place? How to place this in a discourse, or rather, a dispositive of surveillance, big data, capitalism, authoritarian regimes, populism, social media and hatemongering?

A different way of describing this is to understand these issues as located in a field of tension that sets the dance of ethics into motion. The tension is created between the idea of anonymity and the idea of agency (Sabar & Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 2017; Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). How much agency should, or should we not give to different participants in our studies? Should only those that are adult, educated, critical and un-impaired have the agency to decide about how and that they could and should be (re)presented? Whose anonymity needs more protection? Are vulnerability and marginality automatically resulting in the need for anonymity, regardless of what those that are depicted think, or display about their attitudes? What if these overlay with other criteria that make this more problematic? (Newman, 2020; Virtová et al., 2017). Should a racist belonging to a minority have the same privilege (if this is the right term)? Should a politician have less protection? Even though she is a minority female? Or not?

A similar but also different aspect that has been raised in this chapter is related to the richness of the data presented. In many regards, I have argued for or hinted at a preference for an ethics of excess or complexity. We should not be afraid to show "more". More than is needed to drive our argument into the heads of our readers. More than we immediately understand, grasp or can address in our texts or analyses. We should offer this excess, this more to our readers, to those seeing our data in a film or a presentation. At the same time, we have a clear need for minimization. The GDPR (European Union, 2016) even requires citizens of the EU and areas following EU law to only record and use minimal data, to reduce the risk of de-anonymization and cross-identification. This has clear benefits for the protection of anonymity, of vulnerable groups and individuals in particular. But it also makes our research more sterile, takes away some of the meat that is the hallmark of ethnographic and qualitative approaches and their specific qualities.

Taking all of these questions and tensions into our own research practices is what ethics in motion are all about. Different questions that are negotiated differently by different people in different situations. Looking back at the approaches displayed in the different contributions, there aren't any given or clear-cut answers to be had. Good ethical guidelines are aware of this fact – we need to give some trust to the competence of researchers and participants to negotiate these ethics themselves. But we also need to discuss and scrutinize our decisions with others. We need not be afraid to change positions later and we should not pretend that our solutions are

simple and not ambivalent. To negotiate ethics in motion means that we have to be open about what we did in the different stages of our research processes, about our own feelings as well as over the affects, feelings and positions that permeate our practices in the field, during analysis and when we represent our research to different audiences. I think the three chapters discussed here do this job in an admirable way – especially because they operate so differently.

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Part II

Storytelling

Chapter 6

Ethnocinematographic Theory. How to Develop Migration Theory Through Ethnographic Filmmaking



Sanderien Verstappen

6.1 Introduction

While teaching ethnographic filmmaking, I have often sat alongside students in the editing room. I watched them going through their materials, playing video after video, wondering how to start editing, intuitively starting to move files around, and soon enough, getting into a flow. In the process, they analysed their materials, discussed and reviewed their analysis, and gradually developed an argument for their final film montage and accompanying paper. I have come to think of this process as “theorizing-through-film”, and of the outcomes as “ethnocinematographic theory”.

Some students register for visual anthropology classes because they feel they are weak in theory and hope that they will do better as filmmakers. They believe that theory is done through writing, and that filmmaking is something else. Thus, they come to class expecting to learn about camera work, sound recording, and editing, but not expecting to do much thinking, analysis, or writing. As a visual anthropology lecturer, my task is to debunk the myth of theory as a purely textual endeavour. I teach that writing and filmmaking are merely other ways of arriving at theory, and that an alternation between filming and writing can enhance both the writing and the editing process. Theorizing-through-film is a skill that all students can learn, and that university lecturers can support by creating intellectually engaging support structures.

Sanderien Verstappen, in conversation with Isabelle Makay and Mario Rutten

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How can filmmaking produce theory? In this chapter I use the example of migration theory to answer this question. First, filmmaking offers possibilities for *expressing* migration theory. In the film *Living like a common man* (2011), a translocal montage of juxtaposition enables the viewer to access a transnational social field, from the perspective of people who move within it, and conveys a visual argument about how migration experiences are shaped by social-economic conditions on different sides of the ocean. Second, ethnographic film offers a possibility for *developing* new ideas, and for doing so collaboratively. Our film *Living like a common man* was shaped by a team of three directors (myself, Mario Rutten, and Isabelle Makay), and the relations we established in our film crew generated a challenging mode of thinking-together. If ethnographic theorizing is often perceived to be a solitary process, the practices of filmmaking may invite and support more collaborative approaches of ethno(cinematographic) theorizing.

Besides illustrating how film can express as well as generate migration theory, this paper intervenes in a long-term discussion in visual anthropology about the relations between film and text, and ethnography and theory. In their efforts to defend ethnographic filmmaking as a mode of scholarship within a “discipline of words” (Mead, 2003), visual anthropologists have argued that film is an alternative venue for knowledge creation. These discussions have pointed towards the unique qualities of filmmaking as a way of knowing (MacDougall, 2006) and thus suggest that the two modalities of knowledge creation (text and film) are ontologically different. Recent conversations about the role of words within films problematize this distinction (van de Port, 2018); I extrapolate this discussion here to consider written articles and cinematographic outputs as interrelated rather than contrasting forms of research and publication. In my experience, text and film are merely supplementary modes of thinking through a topic, and I have always worked precisely by moving across these two genres. I thus propose a different model of interrelation between the two instances of knowledge creation, which is hybrid and non-hierarchical. I have developed this approach in conversations with my colleagues Mario Rutten and Isabelle Makay through collaborative ethnocinematographic research, and I currently develop it further with students in visual anthropology courses.

6.2 Where Is the Theory in Ethnographic Film?

Recurrent discussions in visual anthropology have critically considered the role of theory in the field, for example in a fierce polemic around “where is the theory in visual anthropology?” in the journal *Visual Anthropology* (Hockings et al., 2014). It has been argued that ethnographic film is “full of rich indicators of behavioural themes” but “poor at generalising” (Hockings, 2014, p. 440). Some scholars do not consider this a problem: for them, theory formation does not need to be central to the endeavour of ethnographic filmmaking, as the special capacity of film is rather in its invitation to “enter into a flow of events” and to establish a shared experience between the viewers, the filmmaker, and the film protagonists (Carta, 2014,

pp. 452–454). This line of argumentation highlights the use of film as a mode of communication about “being”, not only “meaning” (MacDougall, 2006). Observational Cinema, in particular, is associated with an open-ended style of continuity editing whereby the constructed character of the film is made almost invisible through the usage of long uninterrupted takes and almost seamless cuts, to offer the audience an experience of “being there” (Kiener, 2008, p. 407). The scholarly contribution of such open-ended films is understood as their availability in teaching and conferences, where they allow for multiple interpretations and discussions (e.g. in Ruby, 2000, pp. 118–121). The renowned ethnographic filmmakers Timothy Asch, John Marshall, and David MacDougall, for example, thought that the imposition of an interpretative harness would render a film less valuable because, as Asch experienced, theoretical fashions come and go, turning from “explanation” into “joke” (ibid, p. 129), while film remains available in the archive for reinterpretation. They thus found open-ended films most valuable for theory formation in the long term.

Other voices in this discussion however express dissatisfaction about the perceived lack of theoretical ambition on behalf of ethnographic filmmakers who prioritize the methodological and the descriptive over the theoretical and the analytic (Ruby, 2014, pp. 442–444). Indeed, many ethnographic filmmakers have perceived their practices as a project of theory – to illustrate existing theory, or even as a distinct mode of theory formation.¹ This position has been most prominently taken up in discussions about “transcultural montage” (Suhr & Willerslev, 2013), which show that films can go beyond observation and description, and indeed “show the invisible” (Suhr & Willerslev, 2012). This approach favours constructive and assertive editing styles and finds inspiration in essayistic or experimental film genres rather than Observational Cinema.

These debates on theory and ethnographic film have been highly polemic, one side striving towards open-ended observation, the other conceptualising of filmmaking as a constructive endeavour of theory formation. Sometimes, the distinction is indicated by referring to the more open-ended films as “ethnographic films” and to the more argumentative films as “anthropological film”. I argue, here, however, that these positions are not mutually exclusive; moreover, that the distinction between “ethnographic” (descriptive) and “anthropological” (theoretical) films is misleading. Is ethnography merely a practice of conveying observed situations? Or is it also an act of interpreting, analysing, and conceptualising, thus of theorizing? It is both: in ethnography (both written and cinematographic), description and theory are united. This unity is precisely the aim of the endeavour, when ethnography is perceived as a unique contribution to theory formation through fieldwork, a

¹For example, at the RAI Film Festival Conference 2019, a panel on “Transforming theory in and through film”, chaired by Mattijs van de Port (University of Amsterdam) and Janine Prins (Leiden University) on March 29, 2019, explored examples of theorizing through film. Website <https://raifilm.org.uk/programme-2019/transforming-theory-in-and-through-film-part-i/>, accessed February 23, 2019.

process of “grounded theory” (Beuving and de Vries, 2015).² Rather than taking concepts from existing theories to explain fieldwork situations, in a deductive manner, ethnographic fieldwork enables researchers to develop new concepts that are more suitable to explain the phenomenon under study, in an inductive manner. The value of such an approach has for example been highlighted in the journal *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, which has aspired to “return anthropology to its original and distinctive conceptual wealth—to critical concepts we bring from the field” (Da Col and Graeber, 2011, pp. vi–xxxv).³ Ethnography is positioned here not as mere description of the minute of everyday life, but as central to theory formation.

In addition to this notion of “ethnographic theory”, I propose a view of ethnographic filmmaking as an endeavour of “ethnocinematographic theory”. Instead of either devaluing theory or devaluing observation, I work here to explain precisely *how* ethnographic film can support theory formation. My argument is as follows. Theories are efforts to explain or interpret phenomena. Methodology handbooks describe ethnographic inquiry as particularly useful in developing middle-range theories – to explain a distinct or limited phenomenon (Bryman, 2016). I argue that ethnographic film, like all ethnography, can be a highly useful site for middle-range theorising – for example, in migration studies.

I illustrate this argument through the making of the film *Living like a common man* (Verstappen, Rutten, & Makay, 2011), which illuminates the migration experiences of Indian youth in London. The film follows (through observational cinema) a group of young migrants from India in London, and argues (through translocal montage) that their migration is an ambivalent experience of simultaneous downward and upward social mobility. This argument of ambivalence was conveyed cinematographically in the film and made explicit later in a written journal article, “Middling migration” (Rutten and Verstappen, 2014).

6.3 A Middle-Range Theory: Middling Migration

Why do young people from middle class families in provincial India go to London? How do they experience this move and what do they get out of it? These exploratory questions were the starting point for a multi-sited research project among young Indian (Gujarati Hindu) migrants in London and their parents in Gujarat, which

²Grounded theory refers to a process of theory formation in the qualitative social sciences. It is an inductive process that aims to construct abstract categories from observable phenomena. Research that aims to develop grounded theory is different from journalistic and artistic forms of research in that data collection is guided by the ambition to develop theory (an abstract understanding of society), and it is different from grand theory in that the social abstractions it develops are directly related to observable phenomena (Beuving & De Vries, 2015, p. 48). For original discussions, see Glaser and Strauss (1967), also Miller and Fredericks (1999).

³Critical voices have indicated that the potential of this idea of ethnographic theory has not (yet) been fully realized by the *HAU* journal (e.g. Mahi Tahi, 2018).

documented the unsettling and often temporary migration experiences of provincial middle-class youth who increasingly participate in international education and high-skilled labour migration. Existing theories of student and labour mobility were insufficient to analyse their experiences. Instead, we developed a framework of “middling migration”. We argued that the “middling” (intermediate) social position of these migrants produces an ambivalent and contradictory experience of simultaneous upward and downward social class mobility.

This argument was forwarded visually in the film *“Living like a common man”* (2011) through a transnational montage of juxtaposition, and later substantiated in the article *“Middling migration”* (2014) with further descriptions and analysis. The film can be watched as a stand-alone visual argument, and was screened as such on the Indian television channel *NDTV*,⁴ at film festivals, conferences, and public events.⁵ It can also be viewed alongside the article, and has been used in that way as teaching material in university courses on migration and globalisation.⁶ Taken together, the film and article demonstrate how we employed filmmaking in this collaborative research project as a tool of exploration, analysis, and synthesis.

The project started with an observation. In 2007, two brothers decided to move from central Gujarat to London on temporary visa. Mario Rutten, an anthropology professor, had known these two young men since they were children because he had been a regular visitor of their family during long-term fieldwork in Gujarat since 1983. He was surprised by their move. Although central Gujarat is one of the regions in India with a relatively high proportion of international migrants, especially in the UK, this particular family had always claimed not to have migration aspirations. In contrast to the settled Gujarati community in London, who had left India long ago on the basis of prior links to British colonial East Africa and ensuing family connections, the departure of these two young men from middle-class backgrounds without prior family ties to the UK seemed to constitute a different form of mobility. Instead of relying on marriage or family networks, they had sought the help of a visa consultancy agent to organise their migration and moved on the basis of student or temporary work visa.⁷

⁴*NDTV 24x7* (New Delhi Television): 21 April 2012 (3 pm) and 22 April 2012 (11 pm), 40-minute version.

⁵The film was screened at 17 international film festivals, 16 public events, and in more than 40 academic and educational settings. For updated information about screenings, see the “Living Like a Common Man” website: <https://sites.google.com/view/living-like-a-common-man/festivals-screenings>

⁶The film has been acquired as study material for university courses at the University of Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit, Leiden University, Utrecht University, Radboud University Nijmegen, Ashoka University, Bar Ilan University, the Institute des Hautes Etudes de Management in Morocco, Loughborough University, Göttingen University, Haverford College.

⁷The UK was the most popular migration destination at the time of the film project (2007–2011), with Australia as an important additional destination. In 2011–2012, changing migration and deportation policies in the UK were already causing visa agents in central Gujarat to look for other destinations in Europe and Australia, in the years thereafter Canada emerged as a new site of aspiration.

The migration of the two brothers became the starting point of a research project among young Gujarati migrants in London. The main research method was the making of an ethnographic film. The film portrayed the everyday life in one house in east London, where the brothers lived. The residents of this house were 12 young migrants from central Gujarat, and the film focussed on a group of five residents who often spent time together as friends (including the two brothers). Furthermore, the research included interviews with 26 young migrants from central Gujarat in London, ranging in age between 21 and 32 years. Most of these interlocutors were employed in London in manual jobs as waiters, shop attendants, home helpers, babysitters, or as lower office workers, despite the fact that they had acquired a Ba. degree in Gujarat prior to arrival. Most were from the Hindu caste of Patels (19), while 3 were Brahmins, and 4 belonged to the category of “OBC” (“other backward castes”) in India.

Their experiences raised unanswered questions about two themes that had not received much attention in migration literature yet. First, most studies at the time were concerned with either the integration of migrants in their countries of settlement or the transnational networks settled migrants establish to maintain connection with their countries of origin, whereas temporary forms of mobility did not fit in with these categories. Second, with regards to class, most migration studies dealt with either the lower or upper end of migration, focussing on unskilled and semi-skilled labour from the Global South to the Global North (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998), or on the movement of elites and highly skilled workers to the Global North or within the within the Global North (Xiang, 2007; Upadhyya, 2008). Young Indians on temporary student or high-skilled visa did not fall in either of these categories. They came from middle-ranking families of landowning farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs in Gujarat, often belonging to the dominant social and caste groups in their villages, however they could also not be considered “elite”, as their families lived in rural regions and lacked access to India’s top-tier educational institutes and professional labour markets. The project intervened by developing an ethnographic description as well as an empirically grounded middle-range theory to understand the migration experiences of this new cohort of migrants.

To conceptualise “middling migration”, we looked for inspiration in other studies of mobility experiences, in particular, the temporary study and work mobility of young people in the Global North (e.g. backpackers), who also occupy middling social or economic positions (Conradson & Latham, 2005a). For example, descriptions of youth from middle-class backgrounds in New Zealand living temporary in the UK reveal similar experiences. They, too, are highly educated or have a high-skilled work visa but rarely manage to find high-skilled work and thus do manual work during their stay in the UK. As youth, they also share a sense of coming of age: an experience of freedom, friendship, and breaking away from social norms, and a possibility of “growing up”, becoming independent from the family through a phase of (temporary) hardship (Conradson & Latham, 2005b). However, in contrast to backpackers, the Gujarati youth we filmed in London were also driven by economic concerns, hoping to improve their position at home by earning money,

sending gifts and remittances, or investing in land or business in India (for comparable case studies, see Ahmad, 2011; Ali, 2007; Baas, 2010).

Their experiences are “middling” in terms of their class position, their coming of age, their continuously shifting aspirations, and their experiences of simultaneous downward and upward mobility. Their downward mobility was expressed in the following quote by one of the film protagonists (Vishal), which became the title of the film: “... in India I live like a prince. I don’t need to do anything, everything is ready for me. (...) But in London I am *living like a common man*.” Living with many other young Indians in the same house in London, sleeping on bunk beds, struggling financially to make ends meet, doing manual work in the service or care sector (which they would not do at home), and having to do one’s own household chores (which would be taken care of by their mothers or servants at home) were challenging experiences, particularly for young men from higher and middle-caste backgrounds, who felt that they “become smaller by doing all these things”.

Nevertheless, these young people and their family members in Gujarat simultaneously experienced a social ascent, a process of upward mobility. When the young migrants return to India for home visits, they portray an image of success despite their hardship in London. While their relatives and friends in India show awareness of the poor living conditions of the migrants, and sometimes gently ridicule them, they also envy the financial and personal independence of those living abroad: the ability to gain work experience beyond the family business, to make one’s own money, and to take one’s own decisions with regards to work, spending, friendship, and even love. Such independence is also seen as demarcating a transition from child to adulthood, a rite de passage. Overall, the migration experience is an ambivalent one of both upward and downward social mobility. This was conveyed in the film montage by juxtaposing the experiences of young migrants in India and London (Fig. 6.1).

The accompanying article “Middling migration” made our argument of simultaneous upward and downward mobility explicit and embedded it in a broader analysis of the social, economic and historical context. Its contribution to migration scholarship was its fresh insight into the migration of young people from middle class backgrounds from the Global South to the Global North. Others have argued that the convergence of internationalisation of higher education with increasing restrictions on family and labour migration has led to an increase of student migration flows from middle class backgrounds (Luthra & Platt, 2016), and that the migration of young people on student or other temporary “high-skilled labour” visa does not fit in with existing frameworks of “high-skilled migrants”, “international students”, “working holiday-makers” or “labour migrants” (Bielewska, 2018, Jankowski, 2018, Helleiner, 2017). The notion of “middling migration” was found useful in other qualitative case studies of young Indian migrants to think through the specificity of their experiences of liminality, e.g. in the Netherlands (Kirk, Bal, & Janssen, 2017) and Poland (Jaskulowski, 2018), and has been used in a quantitative effort to identify and measure the distinctive class backgrounds of international students coming to Europe (Luthra & Platt, 2016).



Fig. 6.1 Film stills *Living like a common man*, directed by Sanderien Verstappen, Mario Rutten and Isabele Makay. Left: experiences of downward mobility, right: experiences of upward mobility

6.4 How We Developed Ideas Collaboratively

We arrived at this analysis through a film project in one house in East London, which was inhabited by 12 recently arrived young people from central Gujarat. During a period of almost a year we made regular visits to the house, using an observational style of filmmaking to follow their daily routines. We filmed the youth while going to work, spending leisure time, making new friends, and calling loved ones in India on the phone. In India, we followed them during their home visits and recorded interviews with their parents. Further insights were gathered when we screened the film with various audiences (Rutten & Verstappen, 2015) – including the interlocutors, who first commented on the edited film as part of a consent procedure⁸ before the film was released to wider audiences.

Living like a common man was recorded during eight field trips to London and a two-week fieldtrip to India, from May 2008 to March 2009. We recorded more than 70 h of footage, 47 h in London and 23 h in India, and edited this material into a film of 65 min. Preparation started in 2007 with the migration of the two brothers (mentioned above). Having known Rutten since they were born, they approached him at the time as a familiar contact in Europe (“uncle”). In May 2008, Rutten spent a weekend with them in London and met the other residents of the house where they lived. During a second trip, he introduced Verstappen and the camera, and discussed the idea of potentially making a film. They responded positively to the idea. During a third field trip, we introduced Makay as the main cameraperson. In the following months, she would be alternately accompanied by Rutten, Verstappen, or both. During the editing phases, Makay and Verstappen edited the film⁹ while Rutten simultaneously wrote short stories about the main characters.¹⁰ Throughout the process we worked together as a team of three directors.

This team of three directors was a diverse one. Rutten was seen as an uncle by the two brothers, Makay and Verstappen were new to the family and to Gujarat. Rutten was a professor in anthropology, Makay and Verstappen had recently

⁸ Consent for the publication of the film has been reached with the youth featuring in the film during a set of personal meetings in London. They saw the film first before it was released. Their varied considerations were then taken into account in the distribution process, which aimed to strike a balance between the desire to reach an audience and the protection of interlocutors from possible risks. For example, rather than relasing the film online we rather opted for a layered moderation of the distribution process with theatre and educational screenings for designated audiences. For the television broadcast on *NDTV* we deleted sensitive scenes, thus shortening the film to approximately 40 minutes (the original duration of the film is 65 min).

⁹ The editing process took place between May 2009 and December 2010. The editing was done by Verstappen and Makay at alternate periods during vacation periods. It was partly delayed because of a delay in the translation process. Following post-production (colour and sound correction), a first public screening took place at the East End Film Festival in London on 1st May 2011, and the Dutch premiere took place at *Beeld voor Beeld* filmfestival in Amsterdam on 9 June 2011.

¹⁰ The stories were published in *CUL*, a magazine for students of the University of Amsterdam (Rutten, 2008–2009), bundled in a booklet that went along with the DVD of the film, and eventually published in a book (Rutten, 2015).

completed their Master studies. Rutten was male, Makay and Verstappen female. Rutten was a writing anthropologist, Makay primarily a filming anthropologist, and Verstappen navigated between them as an anthropologist who moves across both mediums. Despite our differences, we agreed that our relationship would be egalitarian – a team of equal directors, each with an influential role in the preparation, shooting, and editing of the film, and each with veto power. This non-hierarchical collaboration agreement ran contrary to common practices in documentary filmmaking, in which tasks are usually clearly delineated, with the camera and sound person following the instructions of the director. As a result, several colleagues warned us for problems, and one experienced filmmaker said we were setting ourselves up for failure. However, our egalitarianism stemmed from necessity. All three of us had full-time jobs and worked on the project in weekends and holidays, with very limited project funding. None of us was interested in contributing our labour to the project if others would dictate the conditions of participation. Moreover, we knew that in order to make a great film we needed more than our individual contributions – we needed the skills and knowledge of each of us. We were simply going to have to figure it out as a team.

Besides collaborating with each other, we collaborated with the research participants – the two brothers, and their friends and co-residents. For the two brothers, the expectation of the research project was shaped by their trust relation with Rutten and their earlier experiences with his written publications, which had included photos and stories of their family. An additional reason they were happy with the presence of the film crew was the opportunity to speak English. Living in an Asian neighbourhood in a house with only Gujarati's, and working in Gujarati-owned companies, they had not yet had many opportunities to develop their spoken English during their stay in the UK. When asked about their intended audience, the youth said they hoped their peers in India would see the film so that they would know what life in London is like – that the streets in London are not paved with gold. Initially, they took our visits as an occasion to make tourist trips to central London, to the Thames, the Trafalgar square, Victoria Park, and Greenwich – in these initial shootings they projected an image of success, fun, and friendship. In the later shootings they gradually showed more of their everyday life, including the difficult and tiresome moments, which then also allowed them to demonstrate their success in enduring and overcoming hardship.

Recording and editing *Living like a common man* was not a matter of searching for the best way to get a predetermined story across. On the contrary, the filmmaking was an explorative process, which generated new insights into what was going on in the lives of the migrants. This open-ended nature of the research was somewhat complicated because of the different perspectives of the directors. Rutten, due to his prior knowledge, inquired in-depth about the migrants' relations with their families and their family histories; Verstappen, due to her concentration on the filmmaking, prioritized currently observable situations in the UK; and Makay, as the main camera person recording the practicalities of living in the congested space of the house, brought to light concerns about hygiene and food. From these different perspectives resulted different ideas about the film, which questions should be

asked, and how to divide our time in the field. As Tsing notes, "...creative authorship in collaboration is hard work. (...) it requires a labor of emotional intimacy, entailing close hours and long years of negotiation and great care over procedural matters" (Choy, Faier, Hathaway, Inoue, Satsuka, Tsing, 2009, pp. 380–381).

Indeed, our project generated many lengthy discussions. As the recording and editing was a collective endeavour, discussions were an inseparable part of the research. During the recording phase, we talked about our observations after each visit to the house, considered possible interpretations and explanations, and agreed on a plan for the next shooting. During the editing process, we discussed what themes seemed important and if and how these themes could be used to construct a narrative. In times of disagreement, the three makers probed each other to explicate ideas and interpretations, to question each other's presuppositions. We learnt to plan our meetings over weekends so that we had two days, one day for orientation and a second day to confront and further discuss challenges, so that disagreements could be dealt with in intervals, returning to it after everyone had given it some thought. The outcome of such a session would be a plan for the next phase of the editing process.

Ethnographic films have often been collaborations between a writing anthropologist and a filmmaker (Postma & Crawford, 2006, p. 3). Such collaborations were the preferred method of Timothy Asch, who worked with authors like James J. Fox and E. D. Lewis to make films in Indonesia (Lewis, 2004; Ruby, 1995) and with Napoleon Chagnon to make a series of films in the Amazon. In some cases, the writing anthropologist merely provides access while the filmmaker (or filming anthropologist) develops the film independently; in other instances, the writing anthropologist has an influential role during the shooting and editing process (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, pp. 74–88; Levin & Cruz, 2008). With the advent of lightweight cameras and reduced costs for editing sets it became easier to make films as an individual: this was the preferred method of MacDougall (2008, p. 20), who wrote that the relationship with his informants is more intimate when he is filming alone; and of Mead (2003), who argued that "...the best work is done when filmmaker and ethnographer are combined in the same person". Nevertheless, even today, many filmmakers prefer to work in collaborative constellations to incorporate different forms of expertise. Our project illustrates that collaborative filmmaking is not only possible, it can also be generative in shaping new ideas and interpretations throughout the process. While the diversity of our interests created practical challenges, it also challenged us to incorporate different elements in the analysis and to carefully consider and cross-examine our observations and interpretations.

6.5 How We Developed an Argument Through Montage

In grounded theory formation, qualitative analysis consists of three steps: (a) careful exploration of data; (b) reducing the number of themes by distinguishing important ones from minor ones; and (c) structuring themes in relation to each other (Boeije,

2005, pp. 85–119). Our editing followed these steps, starting with reviewing the material and delineating themes, then selecting themes through discussion of the footage, and finally constructing a narrative film. While watching the film material, when we saw certain themes emerging as powerful from the material, we discussed and further developed these in the editing process. We followed a twofold editing process, which we called: “from large to small” and “from small to large”.

When editing “from large to small”, we categorised the footage – by creating separate folders and timelines for each of the protagonists, and for footage of the house in which they lived. An example of a timeline that was generated in this phase (by Makay), of the film character Sohang, was approximately three hours and contained elements of all the scenes we had recorded with him. This timeline was viewed by the three directors together during a meeting. During the discussion that followed we identified strong material, which we found striking or significant, and singled out key scenes. For example, Sohang’s decision to move back to India before his visa expired turned out particularly moving, not only due to the long interview in which he explained his motivations but also due to the footage shot after the interview, in which Sohang opened his suitcases to show his passport and ticket, his salary slip of 1.000 pounds per month (for a factory job of 60 h a week), and the various items he had bought with this money in London: a laptop, a mobile phone, cosmetics, clothes, gifts for his family. The scene revealed Sohang’s desperation to return to India (“My ticket! See properly. It’s a one-way ticket!”) as well as the independence and status he had gained by going to London (“That’s the shaving-machine. . . My father is gonna be really happy because he has never seen this before. I have to show him how to use it, he doesn’t know.”) His feelings of ambivalence became central elements both in the film and in the short stories Rutten wrote about Sohang (2008, 2009).

In a second editing round, we worked “from small to large”. In this phase, a theme guided the editing. The process started with a scene we had identified as central, which was now reshaped by deleting distracting elements while adding additional footage to strengthen the thematic narrative. For example, the three-hour timeline of Sohang was reduced (by Verstappen) to a short story of approximately 20 min. The revised timeline focussed on Sohang’s doubts about staying or going, and alternated between cheerful and sad moments to highlight his mixed feelings and insecurity. In it, Sohang left London, moved back to his hometown in Gujarat but was disappointed, reappeared in London, and then returned to India again in the hope of moving onwards to the USA. The footage in which Sohang talked about various other aspects of his life were left out in order to focus on the “stay or go” narrative.

A similar strategy was followed for the other protagonists – “from large to small” (a process of selection), then a discussion of key themes, and then “from small to large” (a process of synthesis). Reduction of complexity was an inevitable aspect of this procedure. While different migration motivations appeared in the narratives, we mostly focussed on one particular motive for each protagonist. Rather than describing one individual in his or her full complexity, the protagonists were thus reduced to (somewhat flat) characters. For example, Sohang was portrayed primarily as an

economic migrant who had moved to London in the hope of obtaining money; another protagonist (Vishal) as an experience-seeker who came “to learn and to earn”; and the love story of a young couple in the house showed that love could also be a motive for migration. While this narrative strategy reduced complex individuals to the protagonist of a “migrant” (Trencsényi and Naumescu, Chap. 7, in this volume), the film still revealed diversity and complexity by exposing, through the different characters, a range of migration motivations.

The stories of the film characters were interwoven with dream sequences conveying aspirations, in the form of video-clips. The protagonists often spoke about their prior dreams of going to the West, and vice versa about their dreams of going back to India to escape the harsh realities of their life and work in London. Through video clips we could create dreamy sequences on both sides of the ocean, which became a counterpoint to the observational moments of the film in which their daily routines were followed. Although the choice of video clips can be seen as a break with earlier traditions of Observational Cinema that tended to refrain from adding external music layers, these clips stayed within the life worlds of the protagonists, using the favourite songs they themselves had posted on their social media (Orkut) pages.

Overall, the argument was inferred from a hybrid process involving both visual and textual modes of communication: filming, film editing, as well as writing and discussion. In the preparation phase, previous long-term research of a writing ethnographer (Rutten) informed the conceptualisation of the film. In this phase, we were guided by theories of transnationalism and migration studies, but also realised that the cohort of migrants we were filming did not neatly fit existing frameworks. During the filming phase, when open-ended conversations and observations were conducted, the team probed deeper into these issues of migration and transnationalism but was also drawn towards unforeseen themes, particularly towards the observable and practical aspects of the migration experience. In the editing phase, a process of reviewing, categorising, selecting, and connecting turned diverse and multi-layered footages into a film – a process that resonates with established procedures of qualitative analysis that are normally advised for textual resources (cf. Bernhard & Ryan, 2010; Boeije, 2005).

Our argument was not developed through one single medium. Rather than treating film and text as separate or radically different, we continually worked across both mediums to explore, reflect, discuss, and analyse migration experiences and motivations. Film drew our attention to the migrant’s concrete everyday living experiences, in particular, to the simultaneous experiences of downward mobility in London and upward mobility in India. Writing enabled us to make our ideas explicit, to sharpen our internal discussions, and to publish about preliminary findings while the editing was still ongoing. In the end we all agreed on what we wanted to say, and on how we wanted to convey that story. When the films’ protagonists saw the film and gave it their blessing, we knew that we got it right.

6.6 Teaching Ethnocinematographic Theory

Teaching ethnocinematographic theory can be a challenge. While students enter universities with a range of visual communication skills, they tend to quickly learn that film is irrelevant within the academic world. They learn to regard film as mere time pass, as a resource to be studied, or as an illustrative teaching tool, not as a central conduit of theory formation. This has impact on their self-perception. Some students think clearly, are well-equipped to present their ideas orally in a classroom discussion, or have a natural talent for editing film to express their views, however, despite these cognitive talents, such students may come to believe they are not “theoretical” because they have learnt that only thoughts that are expressed through writing count as such. University lecturers have the option to break with this tradition. Below, I give practical advice to lecturers who wish to encourage their students to think from film. Even students with prior filmmaking training and advanced technological skills need this kind of academic support and supervision in order to discover how they can work with filmmaking practices during research.

6.6.1 *Step 1 – Treat Film and Text as Equal*

It is the task of any university lecturer to familiarise students with the two basic processes of theory formation – deduction (testing existing theory) and induction (developing new theory through ethnography), and then to make them aware when and how they are doing it (through process feedback). The first step towards enabling ethnocinematographic theory is to recognise that these processes of theory formation can develop across different platforms. If students learnt to associate “theory” with books and articles, they can also unlearn this association – if the lecturer enables them to think of film as an intellectual contribution to a discussion about how to see and understand the world, and of theory formation as a heuristic process that can evolve across different modes of expression. For example, lecturers can design systems of examination and evaluation in such a way that they treat the skills of montage, writing, and discussion as different and supplementary but equally important pathways to knowledge.

6.6.2 *Step 2 – Recognize the Analytical Potential of the Editing Room*

Within ethnographic filmmaking, the editing room is where filmmakers familiarize themselves with their footage and find linkages and contradictions within the material. It is through these practices of selection and synthesis that they start analysing their materials and develop an argument. Preliminary screenings and discussions of

initial edits can help to clarify the argument; in the end, the editing is directed towards effectively expressing this argument. When these processes are recognized as analogous with processes of qualitative data analysis in the social sciences, so that students will be able to implement their acquired skills in later (even non-visual) research projects, this can enhance their capacity not only as filmmakers but also as researchers.

6.6.3 Step 3 – Stimulate Collective Genius

While students work on a film project individually in some of my courses, I have often established film crews of 2–3 students, who bring a variety of talents, skills, and learning styles to their project. Collaboration encourages them to step out of their comfort zone and to learn about different ways of working beyond those they are familiar with. Contrary to practices in documentary film schools, I encourage students to form non-hierarchical crews of directors, to work in egalitarian relations with other students. This can create friction and discussion, which slows down the process, but enhances learning if students feel challenged to think critically about their initial interpretations of the footage, and to consider alternative interpretations and explanations. In the classroom, I stimulate discussions about these differences through break-away sessions and peer-to-peer meetings that encourage reflection on how interpretations are shaped by their own positions and experiences.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how a film project about the migration of young people from middle class family backgrounds in India to London has produced a middle-range theory of “middling migration”, which conceives of migration as an ambivalent experience of simultaneous downward and upward social mobility. This middle-range theory was first conceived through cinematographic means, through an observational style of cinema that shows how migrants move around in both India and London, and through a translocal montage of juxtaposition that draws connections and shows the differences between the two worlds. I have written this chapter to clarify how this analysis developed, collaboratively, while working across both text and film.

In this project, film was the central steering wheel: filmmaking was a way of learning about a new and unknown phenomenon. The analysis emerged from discussions of the footage as well as written field notes and short stories, and was developed through recording/editing plans and preliminary edits that were reviewed and discussed within the team. The resulting argument was conveyed cinematographically in the film, and made explicit in the article “Middling migration” to communicate with migration scholars. Following scholarly conventions, it was the

article that was recognised and cited as an academic intervention in migration scholarship. The film was used in courses and events on migration and globalisation, and it was the first entry even for many academic colleagues to learn about the project; but it was the article that enabled our idea to be cited in migration studies. The combination of film and text thus enabled us to communicate about our idea to both academic and wider audiences.

For migration scholars who wish to use filmmaking as a research tool, an important benefit is the possibility to link and compare observations of situations in the “here” and the “there” through translocal montage. Other migration scholars, too, have filmed return trips of migrants to their country of origin, and have found that filming has helped them not merely to observe, but also to conceptualize transnational migration experiences (Torresan, 2011). The contribution of *Living like a common man* to the field of migration studies stems from its empirically grounded commitment to middle-range theorizing – the film draws on close observations of transnational migration experiences, and uses montage to constitute an audio-visual argument about how to interpret these experiences. Regarding visual anthropology, I have described why I treat observation and theory as connected, and text and film as supplementary modes of both observing and theorizing. This practical approach presents a challenge to polemic debates about the role of theory in ethnographic film that presuppose a binary distinction between “observational” film and “theoretical” texts; or between “descriptive” observational cinema versus “theoretically ambitious” montage films.

Acknowledgement The sections “*How we developed ideas collaboratively*” and “*How we developed an argument through montage*”, which I wrote several years ago, were read by and received comments from both co-directors, Prof. Mario Rutten and Isabelle Makay (in 2014). After Mario’s untimely death in 2015 I gave up the idea of publishing this article – I missed him, and it became painful to write about our collaboration. I thank the editors of this book for giving me a reason to publish it now.

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Chapter 7

Migrant Cine-Eye: Storytelling in Documentary and Participatory Filmmaking



Klára Trencsényi and Vlad Naumescu

7.1 Introduction

The so-called European “refugee crisis” has bred a profusion of audiovisual accounts throughout the region, many of which aimed to give voice to hitherto voiceless, uprooted people. But as many of these “untold stories” gain material expression as storylines, we are urged to consider the implications of yet another form of displacement: from the historical person to the film character, from personal stories to media representations. The growing interest into the migrant issue and visual representations of refugees have played an important role in the public construction of the “crisis” but have also, paradoxically, obscured or silenced migrant voices. The authors of this paper, a documentary filmmaker (Trencsényi) and a social anthropologist (Naumescu) seek to explore narrative strategies and ethics of representation in European documentaries made after 2010 as well as a participatory filmmaking project developed in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis in Hungary. Having collaborated on several documentary films and filmmaking workshops, we approach this issue from the perspective of practitioners, offering a critical reflection as well as possible strategies for those aiming to produce audiovisual works in this field. The inclusion of refugees’ insight and their ways of constructing their own stories as well as their own observations on the receiving societies can open new possibilities for collaboration and creative engagement for social scientists and filmmakers preparing visual fieldnotes, ethnographic and documentary films as well as participatory projects.

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We find this conversation meaningful because cinema and anthropology share the “problem of the person”, of having to represent an absent body that must be reconstructed through visual and textual strategies (David MacDougall, 1998, p. 95). This issue of “a body too few” has now turned into the problem of “too many bodies” exposed by the overly mediated “refugee crisis” and anti-migration propaganda across Europe. The excess and immediacy of such representations urges us to consider alternative narrative forms that encourage collaboration and self-representation, aiming to recreate a subjectivity that reflects the historical person rather than the objectified “migrant” of mainstream discourses. Once specialized in the “savage slot” (Trouillot, 2003), anthropology has developed the critical understanding and narrative strategies to move beyond the exotic Other or, in this case, the migrant image that haunts Europe today. Inspired by experiments with participatory and collaborative filmmaking we set out to explore the possibilities and limitations of the camera to give voice to migrants in the current context and produce a shared story.

The chapter starts with a critical reflection of the humanitarian impulse in recently acclaimed European documentaries engaging with the issue of migration. It zooms afterwards into Hungary, a prominent case at the time, to show how structural conditions including European integration funds, state propaganda and practices of othering have shaped narrative strategies in Hungarian documentary before and after the “refugee crisis” in 2015. Finally, it describes a participatory filmmaking project developed within the frames of CEU’s Open Learning Initiative (OLive) which aimed to respond to this situation by creating a safe space for refugees and asylum seekers in Hungary to develop their own visual stories. Forced to stop before completion because of tightening government regulations, this project represents an invitation to the reader to pursue further our search for a “subjective voice” through collaborative filmmaking.

7.2 The Migrant Image as Constructed in Recent European Documentaries

Documentary filmmakers have long been aware of the rising number of refugees arriving to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea or overland through South-East Europe, via the so-called “Balkan route”. But it was not until the 2015 “refugee crisis” and the shocking images circulating in the media that documentary films started to get public attention (see Augustová, Chap. 11, in this volume). The film industry decided to prioritize the topic of migration so films already in development were rushed through post-production to enter distribution and many new projects kicked off. The competition between films and filmmakers to cover the topic became so intense that even festival hits, like the Locarno winner *Lampedusa in Winter* (2015) with over 60 festival selections were soon taken off the screen to give place to new films; in this particular case to *Fire at Sea* (2016), a film shot on the same island, about the same topic but in an escalating political and dramatic climate.

Jakob Brossman, the director of *Lampedusa in Winter*, had been working on his documentary for several years focusing on the superhuman efforts and the humanitarian approach of the mayor of this small Italian island to keep things running despite rough winters, economic difficulties and the influx of refugees arriving by boat. As time went by, the refugee issue became the most prominent, becoming a key stage for the mayor to act and reveal her human side and an opportunity for the filmmaker to address Italy's (and Europe's) political inertia. In this process, Brossman shifted focus from the kind of mosaic film he was doing - depicting the everyday life of touristic Lampedusa - towards the dramatic events unfolding in front of his eyes. This move turned the film into one of the most celebrated European documentaries portraying the migrant crisis exactly at the time when it became a hot political issue that made media headlines. The film trailer underlines that "Lampedusa is a symbol that is known all over the world, but as an island it is unknown". So even if the influx of refugees dominates the scene, Brossman chooses to direct his gaze towards us, Europeans, to see what effect this phenomenon has on the local society. The film follows the local mayor, the football team, the island's radio commentator, the coastal guards and eventually the refugees too, but only as they pass by or interact with the locals, depicting them as a collectivity rather than individualized characters. Their stories are approached from the sidelines, through the portrait of an Italian lady for example, who visits the anonymous refugee graves in the cemetery to keep their memory alive, or the perspective of other locals who gather refugees' lost objects (diaries, clothes etc.) and try to re-create their lost lives this way. With this, Brossman underscores the human solidarity emerging in these circumstances rather than giving migrants a voice in his film. He uses the refugee crisis and its impact on the local community to uncover social exclusion and marginality and show how marginalized people, whether refugees or Italian citizens at the periphery of the state stand together in such circumstances - "because the inhabitants of the island regard themselves as victims of the same cynical politics as the refugees"¹.

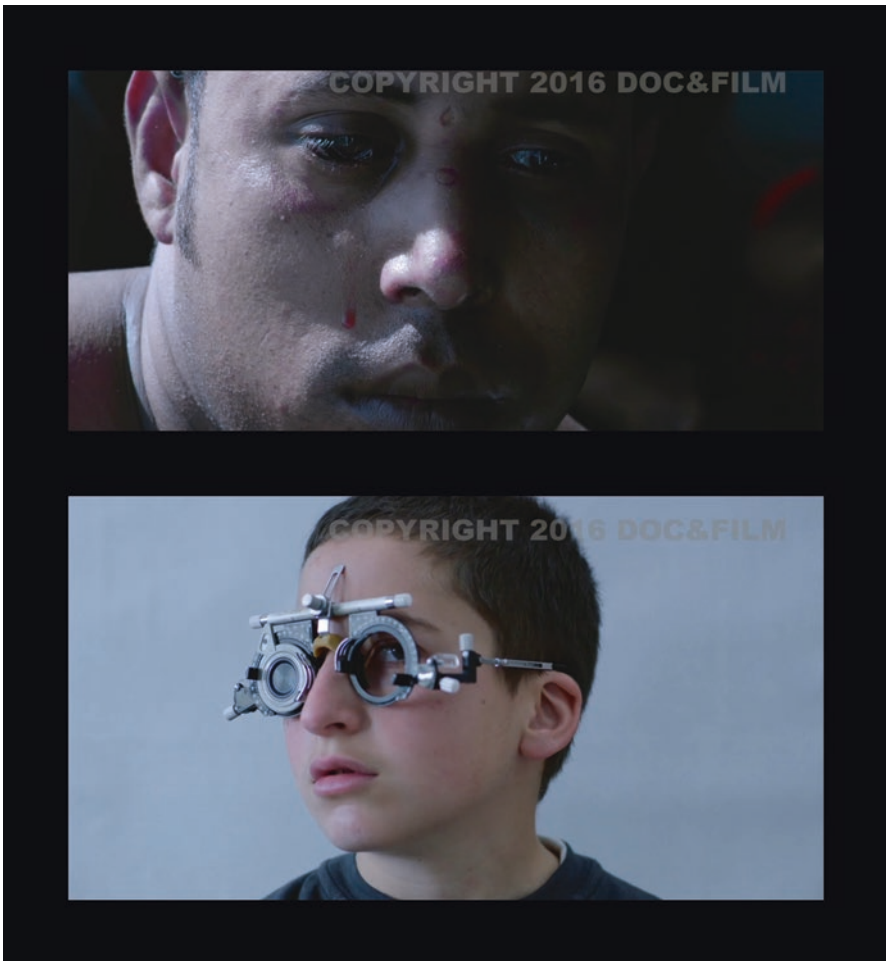
Fire at Sea (Fuocoammare), the documentary that replaced Brossmann's film in the festival circuit, was greeted by critics as the "cinematic Pietá"² of the European refugee crisis. Like its predecessor, the film observes Lampedusa's inhabitants, but goes even more microscopic: we spend time with an Italian boy, Samuele, who apparently lives the life of an average kid on the island but shares the collective anxiety with the others, especially the doctor who is in direct contact with the arriving immigrants. In this story, refugees are depicted as a faceless crowd, an influx of people who have lost their sense of self and identity on the way to Europe. In front of the camera as well as in the eyes of the European host societies they appear as scared, vulnerable people in search of shelter. Composed of several lengthy vignettes, the film gives equal attention to the everyday chores of the Italian

¹ Interview with the Director Jakob Brossmann by Karin Schiefer, AFC, July 2015.

² The European migrant crisis found its pieta in *Fire at Sea*. Powerful, at times shocking, but also intensely human'. *Berlin Review*: <https://www.screendaily.com/reviews/fire-at-sea-berlin-review/5100339.article> accessed 25.10.2019.

boy or to an old lady who regularly calls the local radio to dedicate songs to her husband, and to the rundown boats approaching Lampedusa and the dead bodies unloaded from them. The gaze of the refugees who remained alive is frightened and mute throughout the film and their portrayal in semi-darkness or as a “herd” contrasts the more intimate portraits of the locals. The doctor’s gentle examination of Samuele’s eyes becomes a counterpoint to images of mistreated migrant bodies or close-ups of refugees on the boat in shock and despair. (Figs. 7.1 and 7.2).

Despite the different perspectives, Brossmann and Rosi maintain the authorial voice in their films deciding whose story matters, what elicits our emotions, and to what ends.



Figs. 7.1 and 7.2 Stills from *Fire at Sea* (directed by Gianfranco Rosi, 2016)

The perspective changes in 69 minutes of *86 days* (2017), a documentary by Norwegian director Egil Haskjold Larsen, which shifts the focus to refugees completely. Sketching a minimalist portrait of a Syrian family on their journey to Sweden, the story focuses explicitly on individual characters, but still does not aim to give them a voice. As opposed to the usual media images portraying compact masses of refugees marching away with their backs towards us, here we see faces in different framings, total and medium shots, even close-ups of each family member, but most frequently of Lean Kanjo's face, their three-year-old daughter. The camera is at the eye level of little Lean, gliding smoothly along with the moving crowd, through long takes and minimal editing intervention. Throughout the film, the family members do not acknowledge the film crew, carrying on their journey as if they were asked not to take note of the camera. Its approach, echoing the observational style of mainstream documentary (Nichols, 2001, p. 109–115) raises important ethical questions about the vulnerability of the protagonists and refugees more broadly. Could they have said “no” to the camera in this situation? Did they feel obliged to accept it to send a message out there? What would they say if given the chance to talk?

If we consider the mode of perspective, an indicator of the primary locus of expression in film (MacDougall, 1998, p. 102), 69 minutes does not provide a first-person testimony despite its attempt to recreate the subjective experience of the little girl. Instead, it involves the viewers in the lived experience of migration and invites them to identify with the protagonists' disorientation and helplessness. It is almost as immersive as a virtual reality (VR) project where the viewer is placed in the middle of the action, however it treats the protagonists as if we would not need to hear them, substituting their “voice” with music which comes in to raise the tension and enhance viewers' empathy. Next to the Norwegian director we find the film's editor, Victor Kossakovsky, a renowned Russian documentary filmmaker who is responsible for the homogeneity of the style and concept. The film is as strict as a board game with its rules: no words, no direct contact or relationship with the protagonists, no intertitles about the countries and places that the family passes through except for small clues that evoke well-known images of the refugee crisis. The privileged camera and the non-diegetic elements that break the continuity of the real fit the authorial vision and its assumed “observational” style.

In contrast, the observational cinema championed by anthropologist-filmmakers (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2009; MacDougall, 2020) starts from very different epistemic and ethical premises (see Verstappen, Chap. 6, in this volume). Their observational approach is based on an intimate, trusting relationship between the filmmaker and the subject where the embodied camera is partial, grounded, situated “close to or nearby” their interlocutors and representing the perspective of individual observers rather than remaining neutral. This intensity of observation is barely simulated in 69 minutes where the camera skims over people and places and dares to look at the protagonists closely only in their sleep. These lengthy shots withhold the protagonists' chance to look back into the camera or to exchange glances or words that would signal mutual recognition and the shared experience of the moment.

This type of humanitarian, art-house documentary that won festivals and audiences in recent years seemed like a promising counterpoint to the ever-disturbing, alienating media images. Such documentaries managed to shift the focus from refugees as a collective actor to individual characters whose subjectivity is recreated through artistic means. Yet, refugees remained voiceless, inscribed into a story not of their making. Attempts to create a space for their own storytelling were slower to emerge and didn't gain as much traction in documentary production as they did in anthropological filmmaking. Take for example the recent issue of NAFA's *Journal of Anthropological Films* (Varvantakis et al. 2019) which shows a lot of creativity and commitment to collaborative modes of storytelling. Alexandra Maria D'Onofrio's *It was tomorrow* is the result of a collaborative process between her and three Egyptian refugees reflecting on their journey, while *Unimaginable Dreams* by Marzia Jamili with Brittany Nugent and Dove Barbanel is a collective auto-ethnography of Marzia, an Afgan refugee in Sweden. Another illustration of collaborative first-person filmmaking is Arjang Omrani and Asef Rezaei's film *Passager* (2020) based on the video diaries of Asef, an Afgan refugee on route to Europe.

In contrast, mainstream documentaries that work around the refugees' perspective, like Deutsche Welle (DW) documentary *My Escape* (2016), fail to relinquish authority to them. Directed by Elke Sasse, this film is also constructed from refugees' own footage shot along their journeys. But in the film these images are intercut with sitting interviews shot by a "professional film crew" which followed the protagonists' arrival to Germany. In this way, their personal stories become a mere illustration of the broader migration story. Instead of a true first-person camera as in Omrani's *Passager*, we see the subjective camera of the refugees taken over by the scripted narrative of the filmmaker which places these dramatic experiences in the past, already turned into memories. *My Escape* also strives to give an overview of the situation lining up several parallel stories that end up objectifying the migrant journey rather than letting the stories speak for themselves. The effect undermines the initial intention since this structure deprives refugees from their subjectivity, creating instead a typology of migrant experiences. Their footage documents the dire circumstances of their journeys, but unlike journalistic accounts, it is not made with a calculated effect: refugees are shy of horrible scenes, trying to keep up the spirits and not scare the women and children traveling with them. Noticing how those waiting to travel from Ajdabiya get beaten by smugglers one of the refugees remarks on camera: "Hey, we are laughing out of fear. Don't think for a moment that we are doing fine".³

In Regarding the pain of others Susan Sontag (2003) claims that by taking the camera in our hand we create a distance from the horror of reality, even if this horror is just happening to us. One of the protagonists in Sasse's film sums up this experience perfectly while filming his journey: "My shadow is crossing the border between

³*My Escape* (2016) Min. 20.20.

Macedonia and Serbia but I am really still in Syria”.⁴ However, it’s not only the protagonists who are split in two; the viewers and the protagonists are also separated from each other in this film. By dubbing the refugees and rendering their stories into something more coherent and intelligible for Western audiences, the director creates even more distance between them and the viewers. We watch the spectacle of migration made of a careful selection of first-hand experiences and painful memories recruited to create an aura of authenticity around them.

Such projects take for granted the authority of the filmmaker to speak for vulnerable people and rewrite their stories into the grand narrative of the refugee crisis. While some of these documentaries use the opportunity to reflect on the crisis of European values and society, this strategy stops short of becoming a self-reflection about the scope and method of the authors-filmmakers and their positionality. One exception is Orban Wallace’s *Another News Story* (2017) which turns the camera towards the invisible protagonists of the refugee crisis: the cameramen and producers covering the events at key nodes of this journey, like the Greek seaside, the Hungarian-Serbian border and Vienna train station. It feels as if the filmmakers have finally realized that they cannot bridge the gap between the film character and the historical person without speaking about their own position and role in creating these visual stories. In this feature documentary we follow several news producers, cinematographers, and anchors, as well as two refugees through their common journey from Greece to Germany, marked by life-threatening challenges, hostility and displacement. As viewers we empathize with the crews covering the “migration story” for the media and tend to accept their coming to terms with the fact that the migrant perspective cannot be truthfully represented or transmitted no matter how many films are made about it. (Figs. 7.3 and 7.4)

Another News Story seeks to critically assess the exploitative news genre, yet the “refugee crisis” remains the main character while migrant subjectivities become secondary to it. We face the skepticism of the film directors and cameramen regarding their own practice and the industry specialized in world misery. Protagonists on both sides concur: Italian news producer Lorenzo remarks that “we are making noise, but no help” while Ali, one of the refugees who becomes a character in the movie lucidly observes the media spectacle: “as long as the number of the filmmakers increase, kind of a humiliated feeling starts within our souls. We are just toys, and they are playing with us. These guys are making a film about me, and Europeans at home are having their French fries or beers watching us, and pity “those Afghans”.⁵ This is how refugees become the characters of the European refugee crisis, schematic figures placed in stereotypical sceneries in a foretold story with scripted plot and roles. Such limited visual discourse contributes to rather than countering the spectacle of migration produced by mainstream media and the anti-migration campaigns across Europe.

⁴*My Escape* (2016) Min. 19.30.

⁵Wallace: *Another News Story*, min. 17.20, Ali, Afghanistan.



Figs. 7.3 and 7.4 Stills from *Another News Story* (directed by Orban Wallace, 2017)

7.3 Politics of (In)Visibility in Hungarian Documentary

In *MyEscape*, the DW documentary mentioned above, refugees start singing a song when they are about to reach Germany:

‘We are going to Germany, illegally,

If not through Turkey, through Spain

or through Ukraine’.

They also mention Sweden and Austria in their song but not Hungary. Yet everyone, including the refugees in these films, were talking about Hungary at the time as a

place to be avoided.⁶ The news about Hungarian anti-migration policies and the borders sealed by Victor Orbán's regime frightened people taking the Balkan route. Even more terrifying for them was the highly mediatized tragedy of seventy-one migrants who died suffocated in August 2015 in a locked truck abandoned by smugglers on the Austrian highway after leaving Hungary. While it has never been a desired "final destination" for asylum seekers, Hungary became during those days the center of global attention for migrants and audiences alike. Turning our attention to the Hungarian case, we use it here to show how visual representations of "the migrant" were fostered by the EU's integration policies prior to the 2015 refugee crisis, and framed afterwards by long standing practices of Othering and the aggressive politics of exclusion that European states pursued in its wake. In Hungary, this combination has shaped the field of cultural production and narrative strategies employed by documentary filmmakers and triggered a shift from integration to securitization discourses on migration once the refugee crisis hit the headlines. It also provided the counterpart to our own participatory video project that is discussed in the last section.

Since 2012 Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán started to build up a massive campaign against migrants as the principal enemy of Hungary and European Christian values. His anti-migration rhetoric became a political tool well before the "herds of migrants" approached the Hungarian border and made the migrant figure not only highly visible in the media and public space but the evil character in his political drama.⁷ The events of summer 2015, when thousands of refugees were stopped by the Hungarian authorities to cross the border to Austria, became a tipping point and the ensuing anti-migration campaigns of the government made sure that "migrants" became a household word in Hungary (Kallius et al., 2016). Blocked for weeks at the Keleti railway station in Budapest the spectacle of their everyday life became visible to all passers-by and media audiences: families, children, old people spending days on the stairs and passageways of the train station, eating, washing and sleeping in the open space. Obscuring the spontaneous solidarities that formed on the ground, the Hungarian media presented this moment as a fulfillment of Orbán's prophecy, a national security threat that justified the construction of the border fence with Serbia. The public broadcasting promoted this discourse, completely colonizing the topic and the public space. By that time, the borders between the public sphere and the state were already blurred and the politics of visibility were almost exclusively in the hands of the government which decided not only what to exclude or include but also how to be portrayed. The portrayal of refugees as an aggressive crowd suggested criminality and violence, what Gabor Bernath and Vera Messing called the "securitization" discourse of the state (Bernáth &

⁶ e.g. *My Escape*, min. 29; *The Good Postman*, min. 14. *Another News Story*, min. 17.

⁷ This was done systematically through public speeches, national consultations on immigration and terrorism as well as billboard campaigns across the country (Bernath and Messing 2016). It coincided with the tightening of legislation which still didn't deter migrants from crossing through Hungary. Even though Hungary has been a country of transit for many years the number of asylum seekers increased exponentially from 2013 till 2016 (Kallius et al. 2016).

Messing 2016). Even the more balanced media which portrayed the vulnerability and suffering of migrants entrapped their voices in a humanitarian discourse that didn't allow alternative stories to emerge.

This context, in which the government controlled the public discourse on migrants and others' access to it, framed the documentary efforts to talk about migration. Hungarian filmmakers were already sensitive to discourses of othering since the early nineties, a period that witnessed the return of Hungary's repressed Others after a long period of communist homogenizing policies. The awakening of Roma identities and the Jewish renaissance became subjects of documentary production in the post socialist public sphere (Füredi, 2004; Pócsik, 2004). Migrants however remained invisible to the larger public until 2015 despite a significant amount of regular funding made available through the European Integration Fund for filmmakers dealing with migration. Despite Hungary's politics of invisibility towards migrants, European policies fueled local documentary production amidst a general scarcity of funding for independent documentaries. This opportunity gave rise to a number of films about migration that promoted a domesticated migrant image way before the state-sponsored securitization discourse kicked in.⁸ In this process, filmmakers transplanted the narrative patterns of conventional documentaries focused on social topics into their own perspective on migration, approaching it as just another story of yet another marginalized group. Their films depicted the struggles of migrants in a similar manner with those of the Roma, homeless or people with disabilities, framing the migrant experience from the perspective of social integration - exemplary, controversial, human - or dwelling into the moral complexity and vulnerability of their lives.

One of the first projects funded by the European Integration Fund was a compilation of picturesque individual stories of migrants trying to integrate in the Hungarian society (*Three Weddings*, Nagy-Trencsényi-Kis, Campfilm, 2010). This documentary series presents three short stories on mixed marriages contracted in Hungary, focusing on the here and now of their relationship. *Home Paradise* (Anna Kis) tells the story of a Nigerian young man marrying a Hungarian bank employee who often humiliates him and makes racist statements, *Viktor Nagy's Bernadett and Sanju* is about the love story of a couple who met on the internet, while Trencsényi's *Elena and Leo* portrays the love marriage of a fifty-year-old Hungarian woman with a young Cuban man whose application for residence is rejected by the Immigration Office. These stories offer an insight into the atypical relationships of these couples and the inner processes of immigration and integration. We do not learn much about the background of the protagonists, their motivations and journey to Hungary but observe their everyday interactions with society and state bureaucracy that reveal moments of everyday racism and xenophobia. The films do not pursue this further since their purpose was to help the integration of immigrants by constructing a positive image and bringing "the Other" closer to Hungarian audiences. However, the directors remained committed to the topic, with Trencsényi moving on to a participatory filmmaking project and Nagy directing two feature documentaries and a docu-fiction as a follow-up. (Fig. 7.5)

⁸ *Three Weddings* by Campfilm 2010, *Superior Orders* by Campfilm 2013, *Bureau TV* film with refugees acting by Campfilm 2015. The European Integration Fund also supported a compilation of films on migration for educational purposes, *Strangers in My Garden* (Palantír Foundation 2010).



Fig. 7.5 Still from *Three Weddings: Home Paradise* (directed by Anna Kis, 2010)

Nagy's first feature-length documentary *Caught Between Two Worlds* (2011) follows four personal stories of refugees who received international protection and are about to leave the refugee camp to find their place in the Hungarian society.⁹ It blends the integration narrative with the humanitarian discourse, framing the protagonists as depoliticized, suffering subjects caught in between the structures of violence at home and the Hungarian bureaucracy. The film is constructed by interviews and situations of refugees' everyday life without assuming an authoritative voice explicitly. The conventional style and the editing frame "the migrant" situationally and aesthetically without going deeper into their past and their insights into their actual situation. The interviews, with many close-up and super close-up shots, have a calculated effect on the viewer to elicit their compassion. Yet, such "confessions" into the camera tend to play an ambiguous role for the audience because of their "mixture of candor and self-justification" as Jean Rouch has observed in his experiments with "cine-truth" (Rouch, 2003).

The integration genre centered on the "domesticated migrant" and individual, character-driven stories subsided after 2014 when Orbán's anti-migration campaign promoted a securitization discourse which directed the disquiet of the Hungarian society against the migrant as an "external enemy".¹⁰ There was, however, one documentary film, *Superior orders* (Campfilm 2013) co-directed by Viktor Nagy and András Petrik, that deviated from the integration discourse. Somehow anticipating what was to come, the film focuses on the social dynamic and institutional

⁹Bicske, the biggest refugee camp in Hungary where Nagy's documentary takes place, was "quietly closed" by the Hungarian government in Winter 2016 (Cantat 2017).

¹⁰It was revived in fiction film however, with two successful productions, *The Bureau* (2015) and *The Citizen* (2016), speaking openly about the hardships of immigration.



Fig. 7.6 Still from *Superior Orders* (directed by András Petrik and Viktor Nagy, 2013)

mechanisms behind the Hungarian border spectacle (Cantat, 2017) juxtaposing the humanitarian and securitization perspectives. Filmed around Christmas 2012 on both sides of the Hungarian-Serbian border, it reveals two different worlds mobilized around European migrants. On the Hungarian side, the border police joined by local vigilantes (“volunteer civil guards”) are constantly on patrol supported by an impressive mechanism of surveillance that turns migrants into “targets”: we only get to see their silhouettes through the thermo-cameras, completely depersonalized figures moving quickly towards the border fence. On the Serbian side, however, we follow a Christian pastor who brings food, warm clothes and comforting words to migrants on the run, prays with them and for them, and spends Christmas with them holding their frozen hands and feet above the fire. The contrast between the zeal of the locals to fulfill their “patriotic mission” hunting migrants and the fragile relationship of trust built between the pastor and passing migrants makes for a stronger statement than any other narrative. Indeed, the film is tightly edited, simple, without music, letting emotions flow and our empathy grow when watching the caring pastor and freezing migrants in the shadow of the border fence. The film remains quite unique among the documentaries made before the Hungarian refugee crisis, giving an insight into what was to turn very soon into a full-blown border spectacle. (Fig. 7.6)

In contrast to the boom of European documentaries on the refugee crisis explored in the first section, very few Hungarian films on migration were produced after 2015. A notable exception, Dorottya Zurbó’s *Easy Lessons* (Eclipse Film, 2018) tries to find a path between the securitization discourse of the state and the humanitarian impulse of European documentary, continuing the integration genre of individual, character-driven stories. Her film follows Kafia, a Somali refugee girl who arrived in Hungary as an unaccompanied minor and was therefore placed in the Fót Children Shelter. Zurbó meticulously follows her integration into the last year

of Hungarian secondary school, her final exam, her dream to become a model and her first relationship with a Hungarian boy. The narrative develops as a coming of age story somewhat oblivious of the atmosphere of public hysteria and anti-migrant propaganda in which the character grows up. The film is mostly based on close, discrete observation by an “invisible” crew. However, at the end of the film, Zurbó introduces a narrative tool that breaks this tacit agreement with the viewer by setting up Kafia’s confession to her mother in a professional sound studio. This way the subtle observational moments of the film are reframed by a post hoc narration which becomes the structuring element of the film. Her artistic decision not to include everyday politics in this intimate portrait made the film very successful, but it also raised criticism for keeping our attention away from the actual context in which her story materialized (Stóhr, 2020). An exception in the Hungarian cultural field where the government controls the “migrant image”, Zurbó’s *Easy Lessons* became a good illustration of how personal stories can still engage audiences even at the price of depoliticizing migrant subjectivities. These challenges were at the back of our minds when proposing a participatory video workshop for refugees and asylum seekers within the frames of the Open Learning Initiative (OLive) program at the Central European University.

7.4 Participatory Storytelling: Strategies of Engaging “Others” Through Film

As the examples offered so far illustrate, European audiences became saturated with the “migrant image” produced and circulated by the media and the documentary industry since 2015. Their narratives revolved around similar stories about accidents at sea, human trafficking, migrant deaths on the journey to Europe and European countries blocking or mistreating migrants at the border. Despite the humanitarian impulse of documentary filmmakers, their films tended to objectify the migrant experience and the “refugee crisis” as much as those emphasizing securitization and the migrant threat. Attempts to develop alternative approaches and narrative strategies to subvert these images and the authorial voice of the filmmaker remained scarce in the documentary field.¹¹ Even participatory documentaries supposed to empower vulnerable people by giving them a voice have been marred by a rhetoric of immediacy which hides the fact that giving them a camera “invents the very disenfranchised humanity that it claims to redeem” (Rangan, 2017, p. 1). As Pooja Rangan argues, the humanitarian impulse to give voice to voiceless people is inscribed into a logic of immediation that justifies the documentary pursuit of dehumanized lives by its urgency. This obscures the constructed quality of

¹¹ One such project is *Midnight Traveler* (2019) by Afghan filmmaker Hassan Fazili who delivered a personal, first-hand testimony of their long journey to Europe, thoughtfully intertwining private, family footage with the highly politicized video diary genre migrants produced those days.

representations and reinforces their otherness thus reifying the “suffering subject” (Robbins, 2013). However, rather than giving up this pursuit altogether, we should find ways to circumvent the power relation and conventional narrative frames searching for a subjective voice that emerges from the encounter between the medium and the subject facilitated by the filmmaker – what others called a “third voice”.¹²

With such concerns in mind, we looked for inspiration in experiments with participatory, collaborative filmmaking when developing our own pedagogical approach. Given their critical understanding of the long history of objectifying colonized and marginalized people, anthropologists seem more attuned to the subjective voice of others than contemporary documentary filmmakers.¹³ Since ethnographic practice is based on the encounter with an-other who often challenges their own position, anthropologists became highly reflexive of their practice and aimed for developing an ethical relationship and shared knowledge through it. From the early attempts to give a camera to the “Other” (Worth and Adair 1997) through Rouch’s shared anthropology (2003), and MacDougall’s participatory cinema (1998, p. 136), a robust anthropological practice has developed which seeks to generate a space for co-creating new cinematic truths. The ethics, aesthetics and representational practices grounding this approach provide a broad range of possibilities for engaging others in a truly participatory collaboration (see examples above and Piemontese, Chap. 10, in this volume).¹⁴

In May 2016, together with Babak Arzani, an Iranian refugee and activist, we developed a participatory video workshop within the frames of the pioneering Open Learning Initiative (OLive) at CEU. Founded by a group of people which included migrants, activists and CEU members, some of whom had been directly involved in the 2015 events, this educational program for refugees and asylum seekers was the first of its kind in Europe (Cantat, Cook, & Rajaram, 2022). Alongside the academic courses offered by the OLive Program, our practical course aimed to provide new means of self-expression and self-representation for OLive students to create their own visual stories. The course was designed around principles of experiential and participatory learning, employing a wide range of techniques that enhanced creativity, co-authorship, reflection and practical learning. We believed that such a workshop could also help participants to cope with the experience of migration through dramatization, using various tools like storytelling, role-play and photo-voice among others. Lastly, we saw it as an opportunity to engage in collaborative

¹²The notion of “third voice” articulated by Barbara Myerhoff following Rouch’s cine-trance, attempts to grasp the new perspective that emerges from the transformative encounter between ethnographer and her interlocutor and their blending of voices into a new story (Ruby 2000, p. 247).

¹³Despite a longstanding documentary tradition starting with *Challenge for Change*, a participatory program developed by the National Film Board of Canada in the 1960s.

¹⁴See for example the edited collections *Visual interventions: applied visual anthropology* (Pink 2007) and *Participatory visual and digital research in action* (Gubrium et. al 2015).

filmmaking with the students and explore alternative modes of storytelling and visual expression.

We started by giving cameras to our students from the very first moment and only guided their hands-on training based on their own questions and needs of expression. In this way we hoped to free their eye and imagination from conventions and liberate ourselves from the omnipresent media stereotypes. First, we asked them to prepare a short photo story about their home in Hungary and picture themselves within their new home (we used these photo stories later on to introduce the concept of editing and the different interpretations images can generate by association and sequencing). Most participants didn't have experience in producing visual stories except for the usual "refugee selfies" which constitute an important mode of self-representation in itself (Risam, 2018; Zimanyi, 2017). Yet, each student came back with well-conceived, intriguing stories that represented their homes and everyday life but also revealed their current emotional state. B., a student from the Ivory Coast settled in Budapest, took a picture about the aging socialist panel houses in his neighborhood juxtaposed with his cosy flat arranged according to his taste, and a self-portrait in the mirror, impeccably dressed. When watching the pictures together, he told us how grateful he was for finding a new home, mentioning the difficulties he faced in an almost exclusively white city and the friendly relations he developed with his own neighbors. In contrast, A., an Iranian student, took a picture of his shared room in a homeless center, which revealed his uncertainty about the status of his asylum procedure and his waiting for something better to come. This picture which looks like a split-screen shot, reveals two different universes crammed into a single room, one inhabited by a hopeful young man, the other by a resigned, old person. F., from Nigeria, took a picture of a clock on the empty walls of his rented apartment, symbol of the long wait to settle down and find his place in Hungary. By the end of the term, however, he brought another picture where he substituted the clock with the framed course diploma issued by the OLIVE program, a newly found "home" in the endless waiting for the refugee status. (Figs. 7.7 and 7.8)

In class, the photo stories triggered memories about the homes they left and their journeys to Hungary. We decided not to insist on these memories immediately but noticed how small details triggered important stories and collectively shared experiences – as for example when somebody mentioned "shoes", almost everybody had a story of these "companions" along their long journey across borders. So later, in a follow-up drama workshop, the instructor used this trigger to bring back and reenact these migration stories in class. During the collective discussion that followed this exercise, we also noticed how important it was for participants to reflect on their recent experiences in a safe environment where no one sought to expose their suffering to the camera or forced them to remember the difficult moments of their journey. The subjective voice is always mediated and fragmentary and requires appropriate narrative forms as well as a "landscape of memory" that recognizes people's lived experience, not least in the moment of remembering (Kirmayer, 1996).

After sharing their own stories, we asked participants to direct their cameras towards their new home country and make a short video etude about Budapest.

Fig. 7.7 B's new home in a socialist panel house



Fig. 7.8 A's room in the shelter



Inspired by experiments in reverse anthropological filmmaking developed around Jean Rouch's work (Jules-Rosette, 2015), we thought the reversed gaze exercise could unsettle privileged perspectives and unequal power relations while enabling alternative modes of seeing and relationality. Our students took their cameras out in downtown Budapest, walking through a familiar environment this time as observers. The task, to take several shots with different framings, was open and so was their position. Some remained silent observers, others engaged with passers-by, acted in their own improvised scenes or developed their own mini-stories. They also took up new roles, becoming impromptu tourists or guides in this city they were yet to call home. They took pictures of passers-by, tourists and locals alike, but their gaze shifted quickly from the touristic highlights to nearby people. By focusing on different aspects of reality they discovered the power of the camera to craft its own reality, singling out and redefining a particular aspect (as homelessness or tourism) and turning ordinary people into "characters". This has further encouraged them to collect images and stories they might have ignored or hesitated to engage with and learn to see more deeply into reality as it reveals itself to the camera.

The sequence of exercises built up their practice towards creating their own film projects. For this, we formed small teams of 2–3 students who had to take turns in being the director, cinematographer, and interviewer during the shooting. Four short films were born from this exercise – two of them from the same rushes, because one of the filmmakers decided to assemble their footage in a different way. In line with our pedagogical approach students were in control of the filmmaking process, including the editing which filmmakers tend to reserve to themselves even in collaborative, participatory projects. After a brief hands-on training, the groups edited their own films, combining intuitively different visual techniques and styles: attraction montage, voice-over narration, or videoclip. The short films they produced revealed a diversity of audiovisual narratives and perspectives – self-reflective, playful-ironic, but also closely attuned to the social problems the government itself tried to cover with its securitization discourse such as homelessness, xenophobia and poverty. Free from specific filmic conventions, they brought a fresh eye to their filmmaking practice, finding unconventional angles, provocative framing and brave editing solutions. During the editing process, for example, one of the students, M. from Afghanistan who recorded a long introduction about homelessness as a news anchor, decided to delete his well-rehearsed speech and let the images speak for themselves, a big step away from the authorial voice.

The initial success convinced us to continue with another workshop in 2017 and bring on board a drama education expert and theatre director, Adam Bethlenfalvy to facilitate the group dynamics and creative process by introducing new modes of storytelling and improvisation. This time we asked applicants to shoot some stills and submit a self-portrait prior to the course. This minor assignment brought some powerful images and evocative portrayals. By way of introduction, the youngest participant, seventeen-year-old S. from Baluchistan, sent us a miniseries of photographs which show him painting the flag of his country in the children shelter he was placed in when arriving in Hungary as an unaccompanied minor. Yemeni participant Al. took shots of the newly built metro line 4 of Budapest which evoke the

waiting of Yemeni refugees to return to their country while J.'s photo evokes a similar expectation this time from the refugee camp. (Figs. 7.9 and 7.10)

In our first session we used some of these pictures for an exercise asking participants to treat them as “found photos”. Each student had to choose one photo and imagine a story behind it, giving names and a history to the people and places that appear on them. By inventing a new story for each photo, participants saw how

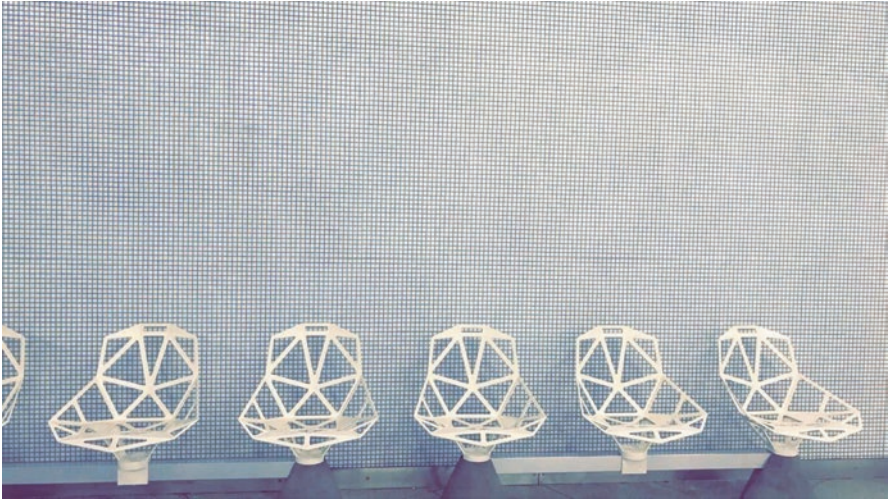


Fig. 7.9 Budapest metro's modernist aesthetic



Fig. 7.10 Kiskunhalas camp

images work once removed from their original context, and how they can be resignified again and again by different viewers.

During the second session we moved from still photography to the moving image, using Lev Kuleshov's editing experiment to illustrate the effect of montage. After this, participants took their cameras to the street to reenact the experiment. This gave them the chance to share some of their desires and longing for home with each other through images rather than through verbal recollections. Given that play and improvisation are rarely part of a migrant's experience we tried to use the liberating and equalizing effects of drama and filmmaking exercises towards a more participatory, reflective experience. Throughout the course, participants were encouraged to bring their personal experience into the process of filmmaking from scripting to shooting and montage.

As in the previous course, we gave them cameras from the first moment before showing any film clips or explaining the basics of framing, composition, or camera features. This time, however, we asked one or two participants to record all activities during each class, thus giving them the chance for additional practice but also documenting their input and the emotional journeys they took during the drama-based exercises. The resulting video material gave them a different perspective, finding themselves on both sides of the camera, author and character at the same time. This encouraged them to communicate their own stories more freely. The insight into the nature of their stories, their will to share them and the respect and trust developed in this process created new possibilities to engage with and evoke the migration experience, their present condition and future dreams.

This is how we all became part of J.'s story, who instructed another four participants to act as family members in a reenactment of his departure from home. Evoking a war scene happening right before this moment J. placed the two Yemeni girls and a boy on his left and right side and started to tell his story. Once he reached a critical moment in which, as he says, "he started weeping like a baby", the girl on his right started to cry. Role play allowed him to create a distance from his own experience from which a new storyline emerged through a process of spontaneous improvisation, identification and recollection. Furthermore, his personal memory became a shared experience performed collectively as a group - as J. later remarked "we learned to work as a group, like real filmmakers". Participants contributed to each other's stories, shared emotions and re-lived their own feelings through their storytelling. (Fig. 7.11)

These moments of cinema verité came closest to the idea of a "third voice" and resonated strongly with viewers during follow-up screenings. By the end of the course we started planning a feature documentary together with the workshop participants, built from the footage they shot. Inspired by Rouch's "cinema of collective improvisation" (Rouch, 2003) an attempt to produce a shared anthropology which delves into issues of difference, cultural contact, (mis)translation and the space between two worlds, this approach turns the camera into a catalyst of social processes and provokes a transformation in participants and viewers. The closing session of our course turned into a discussion about what this film should look like. M. from Nigeria presented the idea that "the true story should be told", and that it

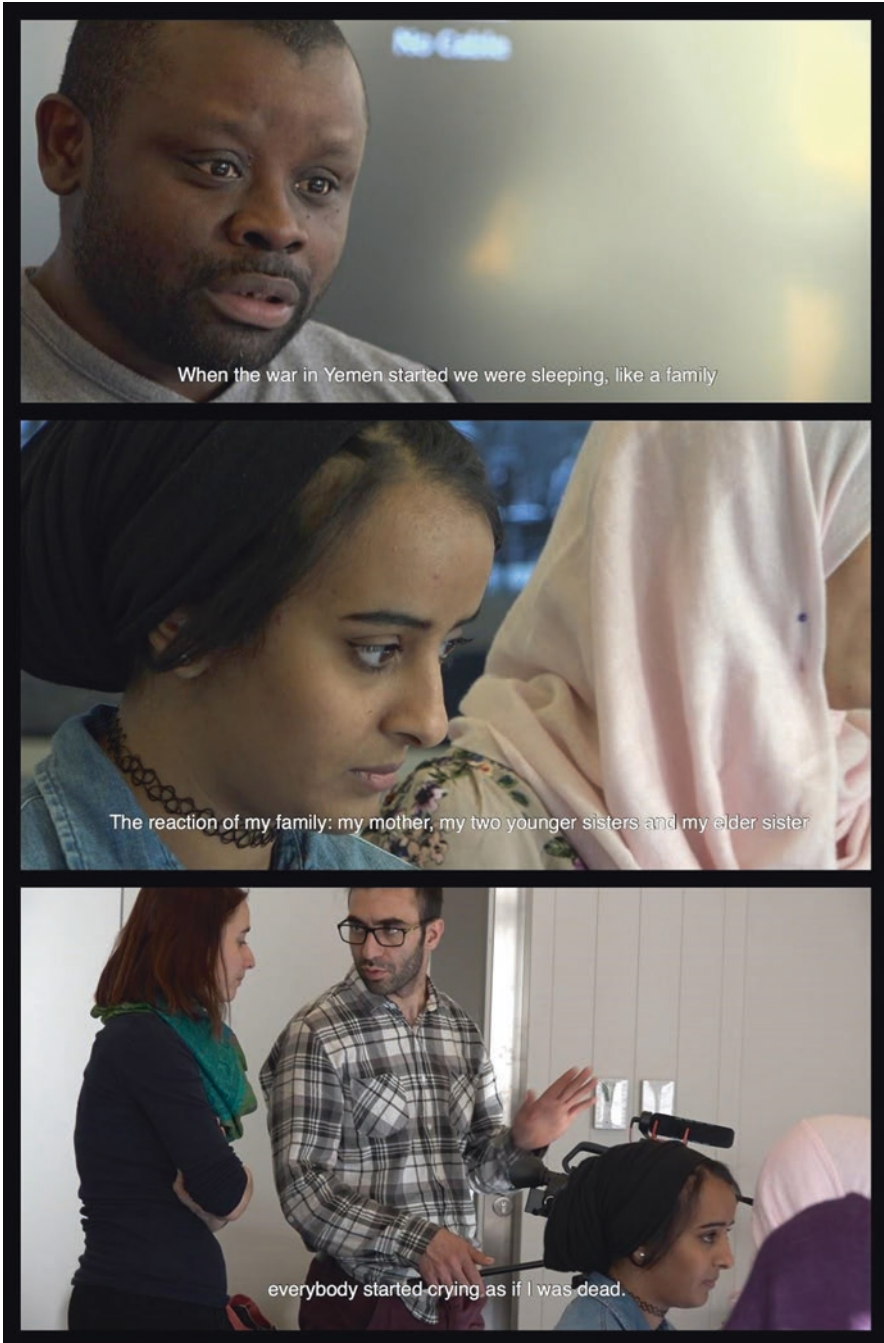


Fig. 7.11 Stills from the role play of J's story (participants' footage)

“should be a film about how racism feels”. But J. reminded him “that such a film could be dangerous, since the (Hungarian) government is against even the head of the Central European University”. So, they agreed that we should make a “funny film”, possibly a comedy instead.

And J. was right about the threat. Towards the end of the workshop, the Hungarian government decided to curtail migrants’ freedom of movement and move all registered asylum seekers to closed camps at the border. This was brought up in one of our last sessions and the discussion filmed by participants. Shortly after, several of our filmmakers-participants learned that the courts refused their asylum requests and forced them to move back to closed camps, without any support or possibility to continue the OLive program. Under this threat, several participants left Hungary while others were taken to camps. Editing, a crucial step in the creation of a collective story, remained in our hands this time since everyone was gone. Still, some participants continued to send video letters after their departure and we decided to go on with the project despite the legal measures that criminalized any organization or individuals helping migrants. We prepared a short video compilation of the photo stories, role-play sessions and the last discussion and approached funding institutions in Hungary and abroad to ask for their support.¹⁵ Not surprisingly given the political context, all funders withdrew or refused to finance this story even when recognizing its value and innovative character. Furthermore, threatened by another law, CEU decided to suspend the OLive program in August 2018 for fear of legal repercussions.¹⁶ This put an unexpected end to our plans and the project was forced to come to a halt.

7.5 Conclusion

Our project, a collective experiment in storytelling, was made possible in the first place by the OLive program, which created a safe space for refugees where such collaborations could emerge. It also provided a safe space for us, as filmmakers, to escape institutional pressure and dominant narratives, and launch an open-ended project of participatory filmmaking together with the refugees. Through the participatory exercises and the experience of becoming filmmakers and protagonists at the same time, our participants started to talk about themselves in a different way, breaking free from the testimonial genre of migration narratives and the objectifying frame of humanitarian, securitization and integration discourses. This allowed them to step back and reflect for a moment on the actual framing mechanisms and gain a new perspective on issues affecting them and the society at large. A simple shift of role and context, from the typical “migrant backgrounds” to becoming observers of Budapest’s public spaces, made them reconsider their self-presentation and create alternative representations to the “migrant image”. Role

¹⁵The OLive participatory workshop teaser is accessible here: <https://vimeo.com/222890780>.

¹⁶OLive restarted in Budapest in 2019 under a different legal entity and its university preparatory programme has moved to Bard College Berlin.

playing during the workshop helped them shift perspective from passive migrants to involved participants and storytellers. Exploring various visual and narrative tools they learned to portray themselves in the present and to recreate the historical persons behind migrant images by means of a medium that has denied their “voices” until now.

When working on their video essays about Budapest, however, participants moved beyond self-representation starting to reflect on the broader context and their position as refugees in Hungary. This experience revealed their openness and capability to exercise an ethnographic gaze on the receiving society, exposing social problems yet maintaining a sympathetic view of their new home country. Shooting scenes of homelessness, intolerance and poverty in the streets of Budapest, they discovered the critical function of film. They used intuitively the camera not only to create their own personal stories but to exercise a new mode of observing the immediate reality. This revealed the potential for our participants-filmmakers to become a sort of twenty-first century “cine-eyes” just like the impersonated kino-glaz of Dziga Vertov (Vertov, 1985). Excited by the newly gained ability to express themselves in a new medium, they rushed to observe life as it happens in front of their eyes. This shows how one can turn the overpoliticized visibility of migrants into a reversed gaze on a society marred by its own problems and anxieties. They could thus become informed reporters of their own and other people’s struggles and shift from being passive subjects of mainstream media discourse to active explorers of their condition and society’s ills. The abrupt end of our participatory project, however, did not allow us to explore this mode of politicization any further and the way it weaves into the search for a subjective (third) voice.

Films about refugees and marginalized people are still to be made so the question how to use the power of images remains relevant for filmmakers and social researchers alike. Navigating through institutional structures and prevalent discourses that shape audiences’ expectations while remaining critical of our own position, we can engage our interlocutors more truthfully in crafting powerful stories together. We’ll be surprised to discover how much there is still to be told and find ways to retell stories that have already been told from a reinstated “subjective voice”. The participatory experiments we see emerging in anthropological filmmaking provide inspiration for us to develop new approaches unhindered by conventional narrative and aesthetic frames. It is high time that we create possibilities for “others” to become the tellers of their own stories and find new cinematic means to engage different publics in a more radical way.

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Chapter 8

Story-Making and Photography: The Visual Essay and Migration



Jerome Krase and Timothy Shortell

8.1 Introduction

It can be argued that migrants express their own agency, via spatial practices, to change the meanings of the spaces and places they occupy and use. Although they are not the most powerful agents in our glocalized world, they nevertheless sometimes consciously and more often unconsciously, compete with others to visually define their micro-worlds for themselves and, therefore, for more powerful others as well (Krase & Shortell, 2015). Of course, migrants move, but they also settle and can establish more or less permanent enclaves. As students of mid- to large-scale urban change, we focus on commercial neighborhood vernacular landscapes which we argue have the greatest visual impact on observers. As we argue here, special attention should be paid to the visible products of their settlement which are enacted in local vernacular landscapes. For example, markets, places of worship, and even the patterns of dress of people on the street can serve as powerful semiotics or “markers” of change due to migration. It must be noted at the outset that social scientist, like ordinary observers, must avoid the common tendency to essentialize these visible signs that contribute to the problem of stereotyping social groups.

Migration is visible because migrants change the meaning of spaces and places to both themselves and others by changing what those places and spaces look like. This simple proposition is based on many years of visual sociological research by the authors on various versions of what Appadurai (1996) might have called “ethnoscapes,” or otherwise visible results of globalization in places as distant from this writing as Sydney, Australia and Beijing, China, or as near as our workplace in Brooklyn, New York.

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A major point in this discussion of the story about migration and photography is that the most frequent way that ordinary people encounter migrants, or variously defined “others,” is visually. For example, seeing those recognizable as migrants on the streets of multicultural cities or when casually passing through migrant enclaves. It should be noted that this “seeing” can also take place virtually through one or another type of visual media. We have argued in many places that what people see and how they interpret what it is they see is extremely important (Krase & Shortell, 2015, 2017; Shortell & Krase, 2011, 2013). In addition to visually recognizable stores and businesses serving them, outward appearances (physical traits and styles of dress) and the visibility of cultural practices such as religious or cultural festivals are often interpreted as challenges to the hegemony of local territory. As noted by Sassen (2001), both the powerful and disadvantaged are often concentrated in cities. As she notes however, marginalized people often make claims on the city as “contested terrain.” Immigrant communities and their informal economies are common examples of this process and there are many ways by which one can study these social, political, and economic phenomena.

Mass media often frame migration as a social problem. Social scientists, in contrast, have written of the positive values provided to society at large of the appearance of migrants such as for tourism, economic development, and the aura of cosmopolitanism. After noting some of the dangers of objectifying immigrant enclaves, Rath (2007) called for innovative approaches to better understand the process by which “expressions of immigrant culture can be transformed into vehicles for socio-economic development to the advantage of both immigrants and the city at large” (2007, p. I; also, Rath et al., 2017). In a similar vein, Hum (2004) has written on the role of immigrant business in New York City, where while its global stature relies on nostalgia about historic immigrant enclaves, today immigrants are transforming historic landscapes not only by forming new enclaves but by creating and re-creating, many multi-ethnic, multi-racial neighborhoods.

In the twenty-first century, the creation of visibly diverse vernacular urban landscapes has accelerated, and similar scenes have become typical in Europe. Consequently, street protests by minority groups, or against minority groups, once thought to be an exclusively America phenomenon (Boyer, 2018) attract equal attention in the mass as well as academic media from Athens, Greece (Alderman, 2013) to Stockholm, Sweden (Higgins, 2013). The establishment of segregated ethnic communities in European cities has also been followed by the influx of documented and undocumented workers from the Middle East, Eastern and Central Europe, Africa, and Asia, producing multi-ethnic environments, marked by “problematic” cultural heterogeneity. In short, everyday ordinary people, whether majority or minority group members, who live and work, or simply pass through urban spaces are changing the meanings of those spaces. In this process they become both products and producers of that contested space.

Martiniello (2014) added another visual dimension to the discussion of multicultural mixing in European cities by discussing the ongoing debate on the impact of globalization on cultural diversity and identities. He observed that most mid-size and large cities display a wide variety of ethnic, racial, cultural, national and

religious affiliations and identities. In contrast to homogenization of culture, or assimilation, various forms of cultural, ethnic, national, religious and post-national identities have emerged in the public sphere, especially at the local level. He noted that, according to Hollinger (1995), the expression “diversification of diversity” is an apt term for describing the dynamics of cultures and identities in the American context and by analogy the evolving cities in Europe as well (Martiniello, 2006, 2011; see also Vertovec, 2007). In the final section of this chapter, the authors demonstrate the value of visual surveys to record and analyze vernacular urban landscapes in the study of migration. The first visual essay, also using repeat photography, focuses on Brooklyn, New York, where a predominately Norwegian, Scandinavian immigrant ethnic enclave became a predominately Chinese, Asian one. The second example discusses the employment of a walking method and multiple continuities and changes evidenced over the years in the Whitechapel neighborhood of East London.

8.2 The Visual Essay

The key idea in the visual essay is to transfer some of the scholarly production from the text to the visuals – that visual researchers use visual communication in addition to visual data and visual methods (Shortell & Lizama, 2017). In a recent paper, Grady asked why, despite living in a more visual age, the social sciences aren’t more engaged with visual data, which, he argues, are necessary (Grady, 2019; see also Krase, 2012). Although images have long-been used in popular media, such as film and video, to tell stories about migration¹ their empirical use as visual data in the social sciences has been much less common. Except in the tradition of visual ethnography (de Brigard, 1995), for the presentation of standard social science research, visual essays were once relative rare and limited to illustrating points made by the analysis of data collected by other means such as demography or interviews.

More recently, the visual essay has become far more common, even those not specifically oriented toward visual methods and theories. In short, visual essays are composed of images and supporting text which provide critical commentary on a defined topic, serving as a kind of argument, explanation, discussion.

Specifically, for the field of sociology, there are a number of other published discussions about the “proper way” to compose a visual essay. All provide some standard suggestions. The most comprehensive and recent discussion of how the visual essay can present sociological insight has been provided by Pauwels (2012; see also Grady, 1991). Recognizing that some consider it to be an “unorthodox scholarly product”, he carefully provides guidelines that enable visual essays to be

¹See for example: “The Best Movies about Immigration and immigrants” available at: <https://www.cinemadailies.com/the-best-movies-about-immigration-and-immigrants/>

placed within broader scholarly discourse by firmly grounding them in social science (2012, p. 2). His many observations, propositions and arguments, as well as excerpts from both scholarly and non-scholarly visual essays, help clarify how to fashion a visual sociological essay.

All relevant discussions of the visual essay, which focus on social science practice, emphasize that the visual data must be firmly placed in the discipline itself as well as the subject under scrutiny. For example, a visual essay in the area of the sociology of crime must be drawn from, and be placed within, its disciplinary and subject parameters, as well as referencing pertinent literature. Photographs collected during a visual survey for example, ought not be employed simply as “window dressing” for the study (Zuev & Krase, 2018).

8.3 Spatial Semiotics As a Method for Studying Urban Places

According to Lofland (2003), symbolic interactionists have contributed to knowledge about urban worlds by demonstrating how people communicate through the built environment, for example, by the common practice of seeing settlements as symbols (2003, pp. 938–39). Individuals and groups also interact with each other through images, the meanings of which they learned through socialization. Lofland (1985, 1998) also argued that cities are places of strangers and that we learn the norms of interaction that result from not knowing others with whom we share our daily routines. She added that, “city life was made possible by an “ordering” of the urban populace in terms of appearance and spatial location such that those within the city could know a great deal about one another by simply looking” (1985, p. 22).

Urban space is always in the process of being interpreted, particularly as people move around in it. Goffman (1959) contrasts two kinds of sign activity, intentional and unintentional, or as he put it, the signs a person *gives* or *gives off*. The former is intentional communication, often with verbal behavior, and the latter involves the interpretations observers make of a wide range of visible attributes and behaviors performed in public. We can interpret the intentional and unintentional signs of identity because of our lived experience understanding (and misunderstanding) denotative and connotative signs in public spaces.

Place, as opposed to mere location, is meaningful. The meaningfulness of place is manifest in an agglomeration of beliefs, impressions, and affective responses of people using the space, in both enduring and ephemeral ways. Vernacular landscapes, where ordinary urban dwellers (that is, non-elites) enact their quotidian routines, contain a variety of places in the lives of the people who live, work, and pass through these neighborhoods. The practices of self and group are encoded in material and symbolic forms, in the built environment and social space. The meaningfulness of place depends on the assumption, which we generally hold unreflexively, that because these places and practices (work, home, shopping, commute, etc.) are

meaningful to me they probably are to you also, even if I don't know exactly how for you (Schütz, 1967). That is why we can recognize places that do not belong to us, that are unfamiliar, belong to someone else (Blommaert, 2010).

Urban dwellers constantly engage in meaning-making in urban public space, constrained by normative structures that transcend any individual's beliefs or experiences (Bourdieu, 1990). These structures shape social space and our interpretations of it, so that we feel that we are seeing the way things are, rather than a constructed order, because we do not generally recognize structure in the patterns and rhythms of daily life as such, only choices, inclinations, and behaviors. Bourdieu (1990) claims that those with similar positions in social space tend also to be proximate in geographic space, a pattern urban researchers often call "micro-segregation." Because people in different social positions have distinct perspectives, their interpretation of the signs of self and group in geographic space are structured, in part, by the differences that define social space.

The meanings encoded by ascribed characteristics and cultural practices manifest in spatial and visual signs in public spaces. Urban dwellers are generally literate at interpreting these signs, even if they are not always aware of how they are able to do it. Many of the signs we see in urban spaces are the result of messages intended to communicate with someone else, not us specifically, particularly those that result from social performance of self and group identities. Sometimes we are co-present during the production of signs and sometimes we are not. Because these signs occur in public, we are able to interpret them whether or not we are the intended audience or have knowledge of their production.

Quotidian mobility is both a significant social activity and an element of a powerful method for studying urban communities. The importance of walking in urban space is being rediscovered. Much of this recent work uses or appropriates the concept of *flânerie*. Short (2012, p. 121) calls the concept "a lens for understanding and representing cities undergoing globalization". Benjamin is widely regarded as the principal theorist of the *flâneur* (Benjamin, 1999; Blanchard, 1985; Buck-Morss, 1989; Burton, 2009; Gillock, 1996; White, 2001). The *flâneur* was a student of the modern city. For Baudelaire, *flânerie* was a way of encountering the vitality of the city; it was a way of reading and understanding urban space. By Benjamin's time, bureaucratic rationalism had substantially altered the city, emptying it of mystery in favor of commercial efficiency and municipal control.

The other side of urban walking is its everyday quality, not as a way of knowing the city aesthetically, but as a way of engaging in day-to-day life. Urban dwellers walk in the city in a variety of ways: commuting, working, shopping, exercising, socializing, and even sight-seeing. These forms of quotidian mobility structure our experience of the city and of group dynamics within it (Brown & Shortell, 2015; Shortell & Brown, 2014).

Short (2012) observed the arrival of an important new kind of urban walker: the global nomad. He explains, "globalization's inherent interurban quality facilitates a new kind of *flânerie*, that of the global nomad, as another process to serve the experiencing, charting, and the conferring of "globalizing" to a city" (Short, 2012, p. 133). The kind of quotidian mobility the global nomad engages in is situated in a

different class location than the *flânerie* of the nineteenth-century aesthete. It comes from an altered cosmopolitanism, where the meaning of national identity is loosened from the connection to a particular nation-state. The global nomad is transnational and transurban. This mobility is, above all, practical and aspirational. It reveals the phenomenological nature of contemporary globalization. “In the twenty-first century, cities are new and strange again as reterritorialized modernity in globalizing cities, particularly beyond the West, combine with global and local characteristics to provide cityscapes with quotidian yet phantasmagoric experience for the *flâneur* to shape” (Short, 2012, p. 134).

Our semiotic approach to the walking method, following the genealogy of the *flâneur*, draws on the work of Iain Sinclair (1997, 2002, 2006, 2011, 2013), the greatest of the psychogeographers of London. Like the Situationists, Sinclair used walking as a way to know urban spaces that are usually overlooked, inhabited by people who are usually disregarded. His writing on East London, in particular, illuminates how working class and immigrant Londoners cope with processes from above – loosely termed “urban renewal” or “redevelopment” – and the racial and class dynamics that result. These aren’t inevitable, natural processes; they are policies implemented by specific people and groups, generally for their own benefit and not those who inhabit the vernacular landscapes of Hackney, Bow, or Whitechapel.

The dynamics between the relatively powerful and the relatively powerless in urban neighborhoods is also considered by Augoyard (2007), who investigated quotidian mobility of a group of residents of public housing in Grenoble. He noted that residents of the housing complex walked in the neighborhood in ways that functioned as combinations, connecting one place to another by a specific route, or as exclusions, in which certain places are avoided or skipped over. Some of these mobility practices reflected group dynamics between the white majority and specific immigrant groups. One practice in particular, where white (majority) residents bypassed areas known to belong to migrants, Augoyard termed “euphemism.” The meanings that these residents attached to the places they routinely skip over is, of course, shaped partly by their beliefs and feelings about group identities, especially as defined by ethnicity, language, and religion.

Use of space is a form of appropriation. Augoyard argues that appropriation is a matter of the relationship between forms of sociability and space. But usage, in these everyday settings, is temporary. Large scale mobilities connect to small scale mobilities and everyone who uses the public spaces in these neighborhoods is affected because we engage in these meaning-making practices in our quotidian routines.

In our work, we have combined spatial semiotics, an interactionist perspective, and quotidian mobility to study group dynamics and place-making in urban communities. Other visual researchers have elaborated on mobility-related methods, including mobile video ethnography (Pink et al., 2017; Spinney, 2011; Vannini, 2017). Not only are urban dwellers and urban researchers mobile, but increasingly, so are images (Cabalquinto, 2019).

Using visual methods and visual data prioritizes the visual channel, of course. Though there is some theoretical justification for this (Simmel, 1997b), methods of

multimodal or sensory sociology/anthropology are gaining momentum (Pink, 2013, 2015). This emerging methodology is challenging researchers not only to increase the complexity of their data by adding additional sensory channels, but also to “to propose new ways of knowing and thinking across established debates and research problems” (Pink, 2013, p. 262). Most significantly, these methods advance the development of research strategies based on empathic encounters with individuals in communities under investigation. It is certainly the case that researchers in the field using walking methods to collect visual data are also taking in and processing multisensory inputs because, if we are able, we are also listening, touching, and smelling the urban landscape as we move about. When we speak of visual data, it is a result of complex multisensory processing; the visual channel may have priority, but it is not exclusive.

Walking as a method, like all ethnographic methods, is idiographic rather than nomothetic. Many sociologists today see this as an advantage, but we should acknowledge the ways it also limits the experience of urban space. Walking is a good way to see neighborhoods, but at the same time, a problematic way to see a city as a whole. Even very long walks cover only so much territory. The slower speed yields enormous richness – narrative and sensory – but at the cost of breadth. All walking studies are necessarily partial.

8.4 Observing Ethnic Brooklyn Change: The Case of Sunset Park

Since 1900, Brooklyn has been a “Roman Fountain” of immigration as the foreign-born proportion of the population has averaged 30% for most of the twentieth century (Krase, 2002). Most pertinent for this visual essay, the white population has decreased from 49.1% in 1980 to 35.8% in 2018 as the Asian population increased from 2% to 12.7%. In Sunset Park, the Asian population increased from 21.8% in 2000 to 32.7% in 2017.²

According to Mauk (1997), Norwegians came to Sunset Park in the mid-Nineteenth Century and by the 1920s dominated the area and, along with other white-ethnics, continued into the 1950s. The 1950s was when many Brooklyn neighborhoods, including Sunset Park, began to racially change. This out-migration is often referred to as “White Flight” and marked the beginning of the end for this once vibrant Scandinavian colony, which in the 1970s was slowly replaced by a vibrant Asian neighborhood. Vivian Aalborg Worley, citing the January 1959 edition of *Nordisk Tidende* (Nordic Journal), noted that the local paper contained

²Sources of Demographic Data: QuickFacts, Kings County (Brooklyn Borough), New York available at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/kingscountybrooklynboroughnewyork>; Race, Brooklyn, New York 1980–2000 available at: http://www.censuscope.org/us/s36/c47/chart_race.html; Sunset Park, Community District Profile 7, 2017 available at: <https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/brooklyn/7>

advertisements for many Norwegian businesses, institutions and organizations such as *E. Danielsen Delikatesseforretning*, *Det Store Bakeri* and *Norske Delikatesse*. Such Norwegian stores imported foods from *gamlelandet* (old country).

The half-page business directory reflected Norwegian ethnicity with names like Hansen, Askeland, Nilsen, and Vang. Norwegian businesses offered unlimited services and “*vi snakker norsk*” (we speak Norwegian) was still well worth advertising. Sætre (2003) noted, “If you talk to Norwegian Americans who experienced Brooklyn during the 50s, they’ll remember how you could walk down the street without hearing anything but Norwegian being spoken. Everywhere, there were Norwegian bars and stores” (cited in Worley, 2007, p. 40).

Worley (2007) viewed Sunset Park as a palimpsest of Norwegian immigrants and its multiple layers of texts. She retold their story through their letters, photos, statistics, interviews, and literature. Worley noted that Sollors (1995) refers to the “– idea being that a neighborhood becomes the palimpsest, the parchment whereon ethnic groups (often immigrant) write and rewrite their histories. The parchment – the community – is reused according to ethnic, cultural or economic changes” (Worley, 2007, p. 61). Such reuse often entails changes of place names, uses of buildings, and local commodities such as foods. She cautioned however, that cultural knowledge is necessary to accurately interpret the signs in ethnic neighborhoods to reveal their heritage.

The 1965 US immigration law increased the ability of Asians to immigrate to the United States. Most Chinese immigrants at the time preferred to settle in New York’s traditional Chinatown but it was already overflowing. Therefore, new enclaves were established outside of Manhattan. Of special importance for Sunset Park’s Chinatown was the joint United Kingdom-China declaration of 1984. The anticipation of the turnover in 1997 generated the flight of entrepreneurs to New York City. It must be noted that like most neighborhoods located elsewhere in the world labeled “Chinatown” New York’s have been multiethnic in composition, and over time change in response to global capital and population flows (Hum, 2004; Zhou, 1992, 2001).

In the 1980s, Sunset Park’s economy was depressed. Brooklyn waterfront industries, which had long provided jobs for Scandinavians dried up when they moved to New Jersey. Local real estate values also sharply declined while crime increased. As a result, almost 90% of 8th Avenue stores were empty.

At the same time, the Chinese had already begun to move in. By 1988 there were approximately 3,000 Asian-Americans and 12 Asian-American-operated businesses in Sunset Park. Some were new arrivals from abroad, and others had come from the Manhattan Chinatown area. The Chinese had found a new frontier in Sunset Park. Property was relatively inexpensive and space was readily available. To the Chinese, the long-forgotten strip called Eighth Avenue was full of promise. After all, in the Chinese language, “Eight” is a lucky number since it sounds like the word for “prosper”. (Brooklyn Chinese-American Association, 2019)

It is easy to falsely assume the ethnic character of a neighborhood by misreading the symbolic environment of its commercial streets. As previously alluded to, even though Chinese immigrants dominated the residential scene of Sunset Park for at

least a decade before 1993 it wasn't recognized by the general public as a *real* "Chinatown" until the stores on the commercial strip visually announced their ethnic hegemony. At the time, many Chinese residents were doing much of their shopping in Manhattan's traditional Chinatown that was easily reached by subway. Ironically, whereas at first the Chinese were invisible in Sunset Park, other Asians (Burmese, Cambodian, Korean, Laotian Pakistani, Turkish, and Vietnamese) who share some of the territory with them now merely blend into the background.

Here we look at a selection of photographs from a visual survey taken in 1993 and then rephotographed in 2019 to compare how the commercial vernacular landscape changed in response to the changing ethnic composition of the neighborhood. In a visual survey photographs are taken as the researcher travels through a neighborhood, in this case by walking, recording both the physical and social streetscapes. Like other ethnographer data, this method produces a many images, the significance of which may be known only later, upon reflection (Shortell & Krase, 2011; Zuev & Krase, 2018). As noted by Rieger "Perhaps the most reliable way we can use photography to study social change is through the systematic visual measurement technique of "Repeat Photography" or, simply, rephotography" (2011, p. 133; see also Rieger, 1996 and Doucet, 2019). Given the rapidly changing metropolitan landscapes there is clearly a value in such visual methods and techniques for sociological reconnaissance of globalization and de-industrialization.

Ethnic enclaves are products as well as sources of both social and cultural capital. When immigrants alter the territory allowed to them, they simultaneously become part of the transformed urban landscape (Krase, 2004, p. 18). Commercial store signs often announce ethnic identities. For example, in Muslim shopping areas in Brooklyn, one finds them in green and white, which are the colors of Islam. Similarly, Greek restaurants often display the national colors of blue and white. Visual referents are often made in news stories about ethnic neighborhoods. For example, "In Brooklyn, Wontons, Not Lapskaus" (1991) Yarrow wrote about the Atlantic restaurant popular with Norwegian-Americans in past decades.

Today, above the entrance on Eighth Avenue and 54th Street, a bright red-and-yellow sign proclaims "WeeKee's." And in one of New York's strangest ethnically hyphenated amalgams, the menu now describes the cuisine as "Chinese-Norwegian-American." (1991, p. 36)

In the Fall of 1993, I and my Brooklyn College students conducted a visual survey along 8th Avenue searching for visual traces of European ethnicity. Due to the large influx of Chinese immigrants, who had begun to take command of the busy shopping strip, it was difficult to find signs of the eighty-year long dominance of Scandinavians. Even Lutheran churches in the neighborhood, the dominant Norwegian religion, sported announcements in Chinese, Korean or Spanish for religious and other services. In a few instances, students saw Scandinavian names such as "Larsen" displayed in the front of a few neatly landscaped single-family houses on some of the side streets. On one set of doorbells, the names Durkin, Chen, and Boyle were found. For the photo essay in this chapter, I returned in the summer of 2019 to re-photograph on 8th Avenue what were the most apparent remnants of



Fig. 8.1 (a) 5906 8th Avenue, 1993, Lute Fisk Sign; (b) 5906 8th Avenue, 2019. Great 8 Restaurant

Scandinavian visual dominance in 1993. These follow below, with explanatory captions.

In 1993, this “Lute Fisk” sign was but one mysterious trace of Norwegian heritage in Bay Ridge, but only the informed understood that “Lute Fisk” was a traditional holiday food made from aged stockfish, or dried and salted whitefish, and lye. It is gelatinous in texture. As late as in 2004 that “Lute Fisk” sign was still hanging on the run-down storefront.

In 2019, other than the address number, there is no trace of the previous store. The rather “fancy” metal and glass door is now a common residential entranceway in the area. The “Great 8 Restaurant” speaks to the notion of the Chinese “lucky eight” which sounds like the word for prosperity.

The Thoralf Olsen Bakery sign in blue and white (Norwegian, Danish, and/or Finnish flags) stands out in many ways from the adjacent Chinese stores decked in red and gold that represent the hope for good luck and happiness.

Obviously Olsen’s Bakery is gone and replaced by the Shun Seafood Market. Next door is a Chinese Seafood supermarket in unusual, blue and white colors, perhaps to distinguish itself from its competing neighbor.

The owners and/or operators of Olsen’s Roofing & Home Improvements might not be closely related to those of the Thoralf Olsen Bakery in Fig. 8.2a. However, the name is ethnically iconic and as in Fig. 8.2a. the colors, blue, white, and red refer perhaps to the Norwegian, Danish, and/or Finnish flags. Again, the contrast to the gold and red next door is striking.



Fig. 8.2 (a) 5724–5718 8th Avenue, 1993, Thoralf Olsen Bakery; (b) 5724–5718 8th Avenue, 2019. Shun Seafood Market



Fig. 8.3 (a) 5822 8th Avenue, 1993, Olsen's Roofing & Home Improvements; (b) 5822 8th Avenue, 2019. New Luck Best Center and Yukee Wireless

Olsen's Roofing & Home Improvements has been replaced in colors, language, and commercial offerings by a wireless phone establishment and a variety store. It requires a greater knowledge of Mandarin as well as cultural meanings of colors to decipher this vernacular landscape. In front of New Lucky Best Center is a common sight in many immigrant neighborhoods where motorized bikes deliver goods ordered from the store.

8.5 Observing East London

I (Shortell) made multiple walks through the neighborhoods of East London (in postal codes E1, E2, and E3), in 2013 and 2017, each several hours long, in which I observed the flows of people through urban public spaces. When I detected patterns of movement, various pushes and pulls of everyday mobility, I allowed myself to be carried along, stopping when I could to take reflexive field notes about the use of the space and forms of interaction observable in it. On some of these walks, I used a video camera attached to a shoulder bag to make a visual record.

In the following narrative, I have combined several walks into a single thread. As I look back over my field notes and video, I recall events and sights as if they were part of a coherent story that reflects my understanding of the visibility of group boundaries in contemporary London.³

Exiting the Whitechapel Tube station, opposite the Royal London Hospital, I am immediately thrust into a vortex where global mobilities and local mobilities intersect. There is a sidewalk market that stretches for several blocks, where most of the vendors and many of the shoppers appear to be immigrants. This is truly a sensory sociology: the sights, sounds, and odors of urban life here testify to the mixing of cultures as well as the pace of modern urban life.

I notice the ways that food and food practices mark the neighborhood as an immigrant place. There are vendors as well as established shops as I walk along Whitechapel Road toward Mile End Park. There are a few restaurants along the A11 but what catches my attention are the bakeries and smaller specialty shops. These signs of more or less geographically specific group identities combine with the visibility of individual identity characteristics to give a sense of the place. Similar to what Augoyard (2007) discovered, I imagine that some majority white Anglo Christians skip over places like this because it feels like a South Asian Muslim neighborhood. (I imagine also that some majority white Anglo Christians who have never been here would tell you how bad it is now, and that feelings like this fuel much of the Brexit fervor.)

³I organize the material in this way partly for the purposes of readability, but also because as I continue to reflect on the images and fieldnotes, even years after the walks, I organize the narrative this way in my own understanding. It is integrated into my understanding of these neighborhoods as places, or, in other words, my own form of place-making.



Fig. 8.4 (a) Pedestrians, Mile End Road at Globe Road. September 2013; (b) Workers at a South Asian Grocery, Mile End Road. September 2013; (c) Pedestrians on Mile End Road near White Horse Lane. September 2013; (d) Shahid Rahman Solicitors on Mile End Road. September 2013. Timothy Shortell

In ordinary urban routines, we aren't necessarily mindful of the difference between the built environment and the social environment when interpreting places. The signage on commercial streets like the A11 certainly provides abundant identity information. So too the appearance and behavior of the other urban dwellers I encounter here. For a while I am walking in pace with a small group, as shown in Fig. 8.4a; their appearance (physical traits and dress) suggests that this is an immigrant neighborhood.

Walking is a significant part of everyday routines for many urban dwellers. The streets here are busy. But I notice also another form of quotidian mobility connected to labor. There are people visible on the sidewalks who are working, and their presence also contributes to the identity of the place. At a wholesale grocer, I notice two men carting large bags of rice, shown in Fig. 8.4b.

Walking past the Ocean Estates public housing, I see families walking toward shopping on White Horse Lane. The large buildings sit perpendicular to the A11 with big yards and the sidewalk separating the traffic from the residences. In passing through this brief space, I pay more attention to the identity signs of the people than the built environment, as the residential structures are ambiguous, signifying a class location, perhaps, but little more. Most of the people I pass on the sidewalk appear to be South Asian, as shown in Fig. 8.4c.

Down the road on Beaumont Grove is a Jewish community center. It reminds me that one often sees Muslim and Jewish businesses adjacent in parts of Brooklyn I've studied with this walking method. I did not notice as much of a visibility of Jewish businesses in this London neighborhood. The Brenner Center provides "a therapeutic programme of activities" for those in need, including a kosher shop and a Friday Shabbat meal. The Center describes itself as "at the heart of East London's Jewish community for many years".⁴ Given the walk-in orientation of the center, it seems this part of London may be more like Brooklyn than I realized.

Many of the food businesses here testify to the immigrant presence in this neighborhood. This is so familiar to urban dwellers that we generally read these signs without thinking about identity in this way. The slow pace of my walk has allowed me to notice more instances in the commercial landscape of identity signification. I see here, for example, multiple signs of professional services, such as lawyers, accountants, communications, and travel agencies, as shown in Fig. 8.4d.

I double back on Whitechapel Road toward Brick Lane. I know that the curry shops there are no longer the best place to get South Asian food in London, but they are cheap, and I am hungry. More importantly, I want to see how the ethnic theme park that Brick Lane has become melts into the creative class gentrification signaled by the Old Spitalfields Market and Truman Brewery.

Past the hospital is the East London Mosque and London Muslim Center. I am attentive to the signs of religious identity, manifest in signs of religious practice rather than other elements of culture. Visible spaces for the practice of faith traditions have often been a site of social conflict regarding immigration in Europe and the U.S. recently.

Turning onto Brick Lane from the A11, the signs of commodified ethnic culture are ubiquitous. There is an interesting archaeology of identities here, as some of the historical markers are visible. The next layer, as it were, consists of the signs of ethnic succession in the twentieth century. On the surface is the consolidation of the ethnic theme park.

There are lots of curry restaurants here, but also the familiar businesses of immigrant neighborhoods in global cities (Krase & Shortell, 2015; Shortell & Krase, 2013). There are other discount retailers and quite a few realtors, as there seems to be a lot of spaces for sale or lease, as shown in Fig. 8.5a.

⁴ See <https://www.jewishcare.org/how-we-can-help-you/community/44-stepney-jewish-community-centre>



Fig. 8.5 (a) Immigrant businesses on Brick Lane. May 2017; (b) Storefront mosque on Brick Lane. May 2017; (c) Old Spitalfields Market. May 2017; (d) Pedestrians on Commercial Street. May 2017. Timothy Shortell

Past Fournier Street continuing on Brick Lane, I see a storefront mosque. It is adjacent to several immigrant businesses, similar to what I saw on Mile End Road, as shown in Fig. 8.5b. In addition to travel and communications services, there are an accounting firm, a health and safety consultant, and a barber that appear to be immigrant owned businesses.

On the next block is the Old Truman Brewery, now an upscale shopping mall and food court. The street feels less like an immigrant neighborhood and more like a well-gentrified one, lots of young workers, students, and urban hipsters. So I turn down Hanbury Street heading toward Commercial Street. I want to get a photo of Christ Church Spitalfields, a Hawksmoor designed eighteenth century building that anchors the historical neighborhood.

But first, I encounter another gentrification site, the Old Spitalfields Market, another upscale shopping mall and food court, as shown in Fig. 8.5c. The shops include some mid-luxury brands but in the central bazaar is largely small vendors selling clothing, luggage, jewelry, and the like. Many of the shoppers are nonwhite. This is a kind of cosmopolitan canopy (Anderson, 2011).

Leaving the shopping mall, I head down Commercial Street to get back to the Underground at Aldgate East. This seems to be the edge of the gentrification and immigrant neighborhood. The signs, in both the built landscape and the presence of a variety of urban dwellers, are mixed, by ethnicity, class, and religion, as seen in Fig. 8.5d. This is what we might call a liminal space in a global city.

8.6 Conclusion

Photo essays, like the two illustrated here, draw on the narrative power of images to create thick description of the social world. Images, of course, don't speak for themselves. As researchers, we take responsibility for the way we use images as data. Even when we admit that we don't know what an image shows, or when we are not sure of everything that it shows, we are taking a position relative to the image and our own interpretations. But, as Pauwels (2015) has pointed out, this is true of other forms of scholarly communication in visual sociology also.

Using images to tell the story of migration draws on our common experiences in urban settings and of mobilities, both global and everyday. Seeing vernacular landscapes, as Simmel (1924, 1997a) noted, is central to how we experience them and understand them in our lives as urban dwellers, not just as urban researchers. Seeing the city as we move around in it gives us an understanding of urban life that images of neighborhoods reference, both directly and indirectly. The viewer of these images possesses that lived experience too, and the visual essay can make stories about which even the researcher is not fully aware.

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Chapter 9

Conclusions: Migrants Through Images



Joyce Sebag and Jean-Pierre Durand

The three chapters in this part of the book have quite different starting points, objectives and questions. This makes them rich and allows a dialogue between the authors on a meta-level: not in the methods of description or analysis of the daily life of migrants, or the representations in their new lives, but in the one that questions the choices made by the producers of images to account for this reality, immaterial, intimate and profound.

This also meant that, given the diversity of approaches contained in the three chapters, it was hardly possible to deal with them through term-to-term comparisons or even to confront them without resorting to an artifice that was doomed to failure. This is why, while maintaining an overall view of the three chapters, we have preferred to enter into the subtleties of each of the chapters in order to look at and understand the processes initiated to attain knowledge that paper writing was likely to miss, at least partially.

9.1 Produce Knowledge Through Filmmaking

Introducing her chapter with the question “How can filmmaking produce theory?”, Sanderien Verstappen asks a multiplicity of questions to theories of knowledge: how to pass from observation to theory or how to theorize data resulting from observation? Conversely, is theory sufficient on its own, including being satisfied with administering proof through observations, sometimes interpreted to serve the theory? One cannot escape the eternal debate between the inductive approach (illustrated here by ethnographic cinema) and the hypothetico-deductive approach which,

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starting from theories, can take filmmaking to go beyond observation and description, including the ability to show the invisible.

With the author we can overcome this unfruitful dichotomy: the two approaches to reality must be mutually enriching because they cannot be dissociated if we wish to remain in good faith. On the one hand, every researcher, analyst, filmmaker, and author who goes to the field arrives loaded with theses and theories that they have more or less consciously constructed during their existence. There is no creation from a blank page: the trajectory of the creator leads and influences her observations, her choices throughout the ethnographic observation, it permeates her theoretical choices. There is no inductive approach without an *a priori*, pre-established and non-conscious theory that “induces” the gaze (and therefore the image/sound recording) in ethnographic work, whether filmed or simply observed. In the same way, in the hypothetico-deductive approach, hypotheses derived from theories can be thwarted by observations, and it is from this point that *equipped observation* (with a camcorder), i.e. film observation, acquires an efficiency distinct from immediate observation (with field notes) likely to feed a new cycle of questions-hypothesis-verifications.

The Chap. 6 “Ethnocinematographic theory. How to develop migration theory through ethnographic filmmaking” (in this volume) presents the benefits of this approach, which organizes the to-and-fro between theories-hypotheses and inductive observations. The thesis of upward/downward mobility is proof of the merits of this process: observation of a strong differentiation in the status of individuals in both situations, while the contribution is in the conceptualisation of a double mobility, made possible by the incorporation of antecedent theories (specific to each situation). For example, it is on the basis of the theories of downgrading of young people from the middle class in India and New Zealand occupying middling positions both at home and in the United Kingdom that the observations make sense since, while being qualified, they do not find it possible to take up jobs corresponding to their university level in the host country and live there with rather mediocre incomes.

Articulating emigration country and immigration city, Sanderien Verstappen contextualises mobility both from the point of view of class membership and from the point of view of the migratory project, which is known to concern a large population of young people who, through migration, seek either to develop their skills or, by means of this movement, to individually solve the problem inherent in all societies where the possibilities of ascension remain low and concern only individuals belonging to the dominant classes. The film *Live as a common man*, which was directed towards academic audiences as well as Indian youth, accompanied the research and involved three directors, Sanderien Verstappen, Mario Rutten and Isabelle Makay. This collective film exposes the fantasies of Indian youth locked in the communal gaze and who dream of finding themselves independent of the social norms of the group while imagining London as “a city paved with gold”. The relatively long time frame allows us to grasp the multiple situations and relationships lived in and outside the country of origin. One walks through the streets of India, where the idleness of young people is immediately apparent, while the omnipresent

posters call for them to emigrate. However, Sanderien Verstappen's proposal, which tells about a research with a "translocal" character, is part of the analysis of a migration that is not linked to misery but to a temporary departure project associated with the idea of a return that should be characterized by a social ascent. Although the phenomenon is well known, it is rarely favoured by researchers, who are in their majority more concerned with relating migration for economic or political reasons, often with dramatic consequences for the migrant.

The screenshots included in Sanderien Verstappen's chapter show the cultural changes among middle-class migrants from Gujarat to London. The photos are accompanied by subtitles that take us away from the researcher's interpretation of what appears in the photo to support the individual's awareness of the changes they have experienced in taking on domestic tasks usually carried out by women or domestic workers in the mind of these middle-class migrants. It is an opportunity for the researcher to recall that the probably ephemeral relaxation of original male dominance is one of the frequent components in the absence of family migration. It is also the discovery, within the community to which they belong, of poorly paid work, indefinite working hours and exploitation. Alongside this is also the pride of having resisted the trials during this journey of initiation and Ulysses' way of returning to his native land, of reconnecting with the culture of origin without neglecting a hybridisation with Western culture, which enables them to find the original middle classes again while resituating them in the Western modernity that they encountered during their stay in London. These few screenshots expose public and private transformations of spatial mobility.

9.2 From Text to Image and Back: Where Are We in the Work on Image?

If the use of film has played a central role in shaping the author's analysis of upward and downward mobility, it is also because of the very nature of ethnographic-cinematographic observation, which "fixes" social objects in the film and makes possible multiple viewings/listenings, opening up new hypotheses to work with already existing theories to enrich, improve or even pervert them. In other words, the use of the camcorder can open up new theoretical perspectives at the same time as it shows the social and "produces evidences" that are themselves known to be the subject of acute epistemological debates. To say that ethno-sociological film *shows the social*, here means two things: on the one hand, it is to affirm that the choice of shots (tight, wide, medium) and their length, the choice of lighting (when possible) and the editing mean that the film proposes a point of view or, in other words, a theoretical analysis of a social situation; but it is not a univocal point of view, because, at the same time, the film provides the viewer with the elements to construct his own analysis of the social. Finally, it is necessary to underline that texts (written to convey theories or spoken texts to highlight the lived experience and

feelings of individuals) are inseparable from images and cannot be opposed to them. This is also supported by Sanderien Verstappen, who has associated an article, “Middling Migration”, with her film, and who writes that “taken together, the film and article demonstrate how we employed filmmaking in this collaborative research project as a tool of exploration, analysis, and theorising. Film and text both show how an ambiguous experience of upward/downward class mobility is produced by migration”. The author underlines how the two forms of expression are complementary, especially when it comes to pushing the conceptual argument: it is from film and film data (i.e. also from data collection through image and sound) that the article has been able to deepen the concept of “middling migration”,¹ taken up in international analyses on migration.

In their chapter, Jerome Krase and Timothy Shortell also raise the question of the status of the image – this time it is with photography – in the process of knowing the real: starting from the photo to show the urban or starting from the theories of the urban to think about the photos to be taken in the city. It is very likely that it is a dialectical vision of the relationship between photo and urban theories that offers us a solution to better know the city. But then we come across another question which, after thinking about it, is dual: that of the making of the image and its analysis by the photographer and beyond by the reader or the public. The latter, as we know, is not prepared and above all trained to read images as they are to read texts: moreover, most readers only look at each photo for a few seconds or fractions of a second, the photo having in their minds only the status of an illustration of the text, that is to say, it is immediately struck with insignificance or uselessness. Secondly, it must also be recognized that for us, authors of texts and images wishing to enhance the production of knowledge through photography or video, we do not have at our disposal a precise tool developed for this function as there is for the text: the semiology of the image and all the sciences of interpretation of images remain little diffused beyond the circles of artistic (or sometimes advertising) teaching. Nevertheless the tools exist to analyse the city, as Krase and Shortell’s chapter shows: urban semiotics has acquired a certain maturity and has spread widely in the disciplines analysing the city. In a way, this divorce between the reading of the city and the reading of the image runs through this article: the textual analysis of the population shift in Brooklyn on 8th Avenue brings us to experience the slow departure of the Scandinavians, replaced by Asian populations.

We thus live in a real paradox: in a chapter whose introduction and main thesis give priority to the visual to analyse and interpret the city with its population transfers, it appears that the text remains first in relation to the visual. Because of

¹ Indeed, as is often the case in English, the concepts that work well in the academic world are those that make sense in several strata of social life and theoretical analysis. Here we are dealing with migrants from the *middle classes* of the country of departure, who live a contradictory experience in the host country (a certain downgrading), in a somewhat mediocre daily existence in the sense that it does not provide migrants with many advantages in terms of sociability (uprooting), moral comfort (isolation) or pecuniary benefits (low income compared to the population of the host country and above all job insecurity, therefore social insecurity).

their small number and perhaps also because of the lack of their integration into the text – text-image writing modalities are yet to be invented in paper versions as well as for transmedia on the Internet – photos and the visual cannot play the role that the authors would like them to play. This is perhaps even more true of the visuals of London: the authors propose a very fine development on the importance of walking to observe the city and the social; the concept of the *global nomad* shows a renewal of this form which privileges the slowness of walking over all other forms of movement, particularly motorized. However, here sociologists and anthropologists have to question the importance of *déjà vu* and its photographic or filmic reproduction, which often acquires more significance, or even relevance – because *déjà vu* is already seen and known – than the singularity, specificity and discoveries that the “social scientist” can film in these fields. If visual sociology is a sensory sociology, as Krase and Shortell rightly write, cinema, and even more photography, which does not have sound or real movement, still have an enormous amount of thinking and creation to do to account for smell or touch. The latter can only be grasped by signs that we must learn to perceive, list and keep in memory in order to include them within the framework of our images. This is a heavy apprenticeship, essentially because there is no training or school to transmit these mechanisms of representation of the sensible that are not a matter of sight and hearing.

It appears that visual sociologists (or anthropologists, geographers...) still have a long apprenticeship to complete, in most cases, to master the practice of photography. First of all, in the case of ethnographic photographs, it is always desirable to draw inspiration from anthropologists such as Georges Bateson and Margaret Mead who, before photographing Balinese dances, studied them at length (Bateson & Mead, 1962): they chose the angle, the position of the camera (in height) to capture the details of arm movement as taught by the teacher. In other words, the photographer has to mentally represent the result of his or her shooting before shooting in order to frame it just the right way: in a way, the photographer has to “script” intellectually, even conceptually, the photo he or she is going to take (which is what great documentary photographers of the twentieth century such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank, Dorothea Lange, etc., did). This vision prior to the taking of a photograph is essential to the successful transmission of the sociologist-photographer’s sensibility to his public and his readers.² This means that he must choose the right frame (the right focal length), the best point of view to include the essential signifiers that are useful for his subject and his demonstration while excluding what may interfere with them. Although this exclusion is not necessarily definitive: other photos may include this context, even if it is to function as an off-screen photo enriching the first one. Alternatively, what does not constitute the main discourse of a photo may be kept (i.e. shot) for further remarks and demonstrations.

²Without, of course, making him a model for social scientists, we have to learn from the great photographic reporters who compose their images before they are triggered. We should read all the articles and books they write about their profession. In addition, they have the “pressure” of the snapshot related to the news they deal with that social scientists do not have.

This reflection on the included/excluded signifiers of the image leads us to return to the importance of the signs in the photo so that it speaks to the reader-spectator. The photographer must therefore be extremely attentive to the preparation and conception of these signifiers (establishing a quasi-listing) that he knows are present in the scenes to be photographed and that he must include in his image. The best example of this can be found in August Sander's photos of trades taken at the beginning of the twentieth century: the locksmith has his keys, files and ruler; the gas workers have their lamps to go underground and their files under their arms to report on their work; the young people of Bohemia are dandies, smokers, their hair in a mess and dressed in unusual costumes. The whole "documentary style" described by Olivier Lugon (2001) emphasizes the presence of attributes or the modalities used by photographers to bring them out: frontal shots of wooden houses (Walker Evans) to bring out the monotony, doors and windows of geometric barns to emphasize their functionality (Scheeler), etc. (Sebag & Durand, 2020). On the other hand, not everything needs to be expressed directly – what Barthes (1967) calls *denotation* – and one can give more force to a statement by suggesting its content rather than providing a direct vision. For example, Barthes shows that the Panzani advertisement gains strength by suggesting the Italianness of the products through their colours (red tomatoes, white onion and green pepper), which are those of the Italian flag; moreover, the housewife's fillet placed on the table evokes the horn of plenty.

On the other hand, the photos of social scientists must try to be narrative, that is, they can, in a single shot, not just be a snapshot, but tell a story. This exercise may seem difficult, but it is also the condition for making a "good photo". For example, to return to the chapter by Krase and Shortell, their photos of London can be narrative: on the one hand, the clothing (very loaded with attributes or signifiers) tells where some of the characters come from, what their ethno-cultural affiliations are, and on the other hand, they are in motion, going from point A to point B with an eager purpose, they enter or leave a shop. By frequenting a shop with a sign written in Arabic or another alphabet, they confirm to us their active membership of a community different from the numerically dominant population in the United Kingdom. At the same time, although we are sure that their membership corresponds to the nature of the store, there are still some uncertainties: what will they buy, how many times a week do they enter the store? These are other qualities of ethnographic photography or documentary photography: it must maintain uncertainty, surprise and, if possible, suspense. These qualities increase the attractiveness of the photo for the readers and lead them to look at it and to deepen its meaning.

This question of the *interest* of the image carried by the reader as soon as he or she sees it must also be worked on so that the reader does not pass from image to image without looking at them. There are many ways in which the spectator can catch the viewer's attention and in general they can be made explicit (except in the case of advertisers, but for different reasons...): one can spot the unexpected in a scene, the paradox it contains, the exceptionality of the situation, etc. Although the sociologist must be wary here: the catchphrase should not exaggerate or distort the



Fig. 9.1 Photograph by Jean-Pierre Durand, Argenteuil (North of Paris), 1971. This image offers several levels of reading: structurally, the stacking of mailboxes suggests a high population density, which is reinforced by the multiplicity of names on each mailbox. Essentially male names: this is therefore an immigration of North Africans (read the names) who came to France alone to work, before the policy of family reunification (1974). Finally, the wall covering shows the dilapidated state of the building and housing

subject matter he wishes to propose to the reader-spectator. For example, horizons or verticals that are systematically placed diagonally do not work! A remark which leads us to the question of the aesthetics of photography: the traditional canons of image composition can be respected or voluntarily circumvented if there is a significant reason; the play on values and on colours even more opens up ways to photographic quality; digital photography allows us to take risks that we could not afford with film: play on blurred images, on movements, etc. But as elsewhere, the trap lies in the search for a formalism in the image that would take precedence over the background and the subject matter that the photographer wishes to convey.



Fig. 9.2 Photograph by Jean-Pierre Durand, Construction site in Paris, 1971. This photograph does not reveal the geographical origin of the workers, but it is symptomatic of the recruitment of immigrant workers in this type of work

9.3 Cooperation at the Heart of the Documentary Creative Process

Sanderien Verstappen's chapter raises another, more pragmatic question, but one that all "social scientists" who use film to think socially and debate theories in and through film ask themselves: how to organize cooperation between social scientists with different trajectories and ages. Here it can be said that the common feature of the three directors is their training as anthropologists, but one of them knew the Gujarat since he had conducted extensive fieldwork there, while the two other



Fig. 9.3 Photograph Joyce Sebag: Hispanic family in a park, California, 2014. This image tells us about the happiness of being parents and having a successful life (despite certainly other vicissitudes): the brightness of the colours of the baby’s clothes and that of the blanket contribute to the narrative

researchers were both new to the Gujarati world in London. Some of them practised more writing and others were already familiar with visual anthropology. The first originality of the team was the absence of non-anthropologists, which may have fostered the emergence of a “non-hierarchical collaborative arrangement” that transformed individual desires into a collective force, including with the two brothers, the main characters in the film, one of whom wanted to show what life was like for migrants in London.

But given the material collected in several places with a multiplicity of points of view, the film could take several directions: it is here that the non-hierarchical nature of the team and the decision to take the necessary time to analyse the rushes and edit the film were the team’s two assets. For, contrary to what researchers who have never worked with video think, making a film is a very time-consuming undertaking (much more than a collective work in which each person proposes a chapter) because it cannot be carried out other than *collectively*, in an unflinching temporal commitment. The interest of the chapter also lies in this: the presentation of a collective methodology that is invented as the film is being constructed, not only in the editing, but also in the organisation of the shooting by deciding from meeting to meeting what was to be filmed in the following weeks. We recognize here the

importance of the discourse on the inductive approach. This is what remains astonishing and goes somewhat against the commitments one makes when starting to make a film: even if the final script is not the one that was originally decided upon because of the variations in the material collected compared to what was expected, a common thread runs through all the stages of the making of the film and in particular the shooting.

The same pragmatism accompanied the editing, which is more common if we look at the concrete practice in social science filmmaking. An example is the fact that one of the characters, Sohang, fully inhabits the film, for example by emptying his suitcases the day before his return to India to display all the durable goods brought back to his relatives, proof of his upward mobility. Here the narration is based on the long time in which Sohang comments on each object in his suitcase, sometimes indicating the recipient. The editors achieve their goal because it gives the viewer time by making this scene last: this allows them to transmit to the viewer the emotional charge of the return to Gujarat, which is perhaps a second exile.

The montage took place in two places, Brussels and Amsterdam, which made things even more complicated, but which, it seems, led the actors of this venture to (re)invent the term *translocal* to illustrate the film's triple movement. The film deals with two countries of emigration/immigration, with authors of different nationalities, who filmed and then edited in several cities. It is difficult to predict the future or the trajectory of such a concept, but it does characterize the complexity of migratory movements and the work done to the body and mind of migrants through their nomadisation throughout a world that is certainly increasingly disorienting.

9.4 From Photo-Voice to Cine-Voice?

The three articles, in one way or another, involve migrants as participants in their representation through images, in ethnographic approaches with an anthropological or sociological background. But it is certainly Klára Trencsényi and Vlad Naumescu who go the furthest in transforming migrants, the objects of their work, into *subjects* in their films. First of all, their chapter clearly shows the diversity of representations of migrants in Hungarian and European media and films according to historical contexts, social movements (of rejection or defence of migrants), institutional determinants (role of the state and associations) and above all according to the modes of financing of films on migrants.

If at the beginning of the 2000s it was a “niche subject” in Hungary, borrowed from the representations of other minorities (Roma, precarious, homeless, people with disabilities...), it is no longer the same since the turn of 2014, when Prime Minister Viktor Orbán raised the intolerance and concern of Hungarians about the “external enemy” that migrants have become, alongside the support of the public media. In response, and since 2015, filmmakers have been showing a different face of migrants through intimate portraits that, according to the authors of the chapter, contribute to the depoliticization of migrant subjectivities. But it is only through an

initiative hosted by the Central European University – the *Open Learning Initiative* (OLIVE) programme – that a reversal is taking place, based on the participation of migrants in their own representation in photographs or documentary films. In addition to training in English, theatre and film practices, the aim is to place migrants in the position of authors of their own productions.

After *photo-voice*, the OLIVE program engages migrants (and their supervisors) in a *cine-voice* in which they become the author-subjects of their films since they have the equipment to make their films themselves. Here there is no theory or *a priori* lectures that could bias the self-representation of the migrants-authors, but only an accompaniment that could be described as technical (from the narrative to the use of the camcorder and editing software). Hence, according to the authors of the article, a return to Dziga Vertov's *cinéma-vérité*. This recourse to *the man with the camera* is very tempting, but is it really justified? Certainly, the migrants criss-crossing the city with their cameras let us discover, in the manner of Vertov, what holds their gaze, a world of apparent ease, quietness and the misery of the homeless. But Vertov himself was filming with his team: this allowed him to multiply the points of view and to try to explain politically the causes and reasons of the difficulties of his fellow citizens to live in the USSR in the 1920s. Can we explain the causes and sources of international migration from the expression of the migrants' subjectivity? How can we speak here of the original causes of migration from sub-Saharan Africa or the fundamental reasons for the wars in the Middle East, the vain attraction of the "lights" or European comfort, etc. that lead millions of people to Europe (or North America in other circumstances)?

The film directed by Klára Trencsényi is in this vein of questioning about migration today by giving migrants a voice and a camera.³ In the film shot by the young migrants at CEU university, we witness the presentation of the theatre workshop where the dramatic nature of emigration and the dynamism of young people, which rarely appears in this type of document, are mixed together. There is a cheerfulness in the discovery of a city – here we are closer to Dziga Vertov showing the city – in particular in the choice of the filmed subjects: through their shootings, the migrants question and discover themselves through their visit of the city. They are out of the normal spaces that constrained them and they acquire a great freedom of expression.

At other times, they share their painful experiences. This is expressed theatrically through words and emotionally through the tears of women who identify with the experience of the Other. European aid is highlighted: either through the containers which serve as their accommodation and in which they seem to have found some comfort; or through the internationalisation of their care with the Helsinki lawyers who have come to meet one of them to integrate him into Finnish society. The mobility that continues in their new situation is welcomed with a certain serenity because the openness towards their future host countries is perceived positively compared to what they experienced in their countries of origin or during their

³ Unfortunately this film is not yet broadcast because it was made by migrants about migrants in an environment that is "hostile" to them, thus presenting risks of repression and sanctions.

dangerous journeys. Their desire to integrate and to succeed socially is on everyone's lips; the film does not deal with the other negative aspects of the reception conditions of other migrants – let's not forget that we are here in a university, with skilled people – but it is this impetus and optimism in the start of another life that animates most of the characters that we retain. In this film based on the *cine-voice*, the diversity of the devices invented by the director and used by the migrants give it a dimension of sensitive “truth” that makes the spectators share the intimacy of the migrants.

Thus, this film once again questions the possibilities allowed by the new video equipment. Filming equipment is lighter (in weight as well as in cost) thus it radically transforms the making of films and documentaries in particular. This strong trend had already led Alexandre Astruc, as early as 1948, to speak of the *camera pen*: beyond the misinterpretations to which this formulation gave rise during the era of direct cinema and the Nouvelle Vague, what Astruc meant was “the quality of the transmission of thought through images” (Astruc, 1948). This text is not an ovation to the “immediate camera” but rather a call to abstraction to think through the image and a call to reflect on what it means to replace the text (the pen) by the image (the camera).

The question then becomes: what to do with the *cine-voice*? For what is indispensable to documentary film in the social sciences lies in the presentation of the diversity of points of view – not only subjective points of view by the subjects themselves – to hold both the subjectivity and emotion of the lived experience AND its relationship to the world in order to show the causes of social distress (or happiness). There is a function of revelation of the masked and the hidden by the cinema that it must assume, certainly by other means than the written word. In other words, the “social scientists-filmmakers” have to invent the integration or osmosis of *cinéma-voice* in productions that rise to the heights to situate the social facts that they analyse. Hence it offers the necessary diversity of points of view, which include making the spectator think through the image.

For example, at the heart of the migration issue (excluding war emergencies), we cannot escape the following question, which cannot be satisfied with the agreed discourses (of migrants or politics), but must seek to reach the deep-rooted causalities: how can we express through image and sound that the decision to leave (to emigrate) is not immediately economic? It is not always the poorest and most destitute who leave, for example, sub-Saharan Africa or North Africa, but often those who have sufficient intellectual and social resources to cope with the unknown and new and dangerous situations. These decisions to go into exile are largely based on the imaginary: elsewhere is presented as opening up a far superior material life; this may result, after the betrayal of reality, in a new discourse on social success in Europe and in the distribution of gifts on return, such as those contained in Sohng's suitcases in Sanderien Verstappen's article. The question of departure never includes the question of the emotional deficit in the host country with the difficulties to live them or the troubles that follow. In other words, how, in films and documentaries on migration, can we show through images these imaginary processes that work on the subjects at the *departure point*, i.e. without being satisfied with the compassion

imaged by frustration or physical and moral discomfort, but by demonstrating the political responsibilities of the political and economic leaders of the countries of the South and those of the North?

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Part III
Participation

Chapter 10

Combining Participatory and Audiovisual Methods with Young Roma “Affected by Mobility”



Stefano Piemontese

10.1 Introduction

Using videos in anthropological research with children and young people has gained prominence over recent years (CHICAM, 2007; de Block & Buckingham, 2007; Queirolo Palmas, 2015). Similar to more established visual formats such as drawings and pictures, videos can be used both as field notes (Grau Rebollo, 2008) and as working tools to be employed during interviews, focus groups, or in the creation of personal diaries to elicit otherwise unexpressed thoughts and meanings (Allen, 2008; Harper, 2012; Marcu, 2019; Russell, 2007).

The reasons behind this methodological trend are to be found in specific epistemological and deontological aspects associated with the act of shooting, editing and sharing audio-visual products. Some scholars suggest that recording videos during fieldwork can represent a fundamental exploratory moment and also a source of data that does not necessarily need to be edited for public representation (Stagi, 2015). Videos, in fact, allow one to catch sight of those non-verbal elements of communication that would not completely emerge in written notes, such as postures, gestures and facial expressions (Lagomarsino, 2015). An increasing number of scholars, however, have decided to go further and capitalise their growing technical expertise to edit and publicly screen their material with the purpose of stimulating discussions about their work with a broader audience. This deontological posture is based on the awareness that videos, compared to more traditional academic formats, have the great advantage of creating knowledge on social phenomena beyond the boundaries of written and disciplinary knowledge (Harper, 1988). Actually, videos

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are able to convey the emotional aspects of research and help viewers to place themselves in a more colloquial and less academic dimension (Lagomarsino, 2015).

Images, however, are not neutral, but the result of multiple choices made by the people involved in their creation. They do not show objective evidence, but interpretations and constructions that reproduce cultural meanings (Aguilar-Idáñez, 2016; Lagomarsino, 2015). Therefore, they need to be problematised. When it comes to migrants and discriminated minorities, their public portrayal often contributes to strengthen prejudices and stereotypes and to perpetuate pietistic or alarmistic narratives while neglecting other types of representations. From this standpoint, the use of audio-visual methods can also be interpreted as a means to challenge the hegemonic representations of marginalised groups and to promote social change (see Desille and Nikielska-Sekuła, Chap. 1, in this volume).

During my doctoral research on the experiences and expectations of underprivileged Romanian “Roma” youth (Piemontese, 2017; Piemontese, Bereményi, & Carrasco, 2018), I myself have been using videos in very different ways and for very different purposes. When I met my research participants, they were in the midst of their adolescence and had been living in the suburbs of Madrid for almost a decade. Their families moved to Spain to seek working opportunities and better living conditions; however, both the economic crisis and the administrative restrictions for Romanian citizens did not allow them to overcome the material insecurity which they fled. Since their arrival, forced evictions pushed these families towards continuous moves between shacks, abandoned buildings, squatted apartments and rented flats, but also back and forth between Spain and their home village in southern Romania. Focusing on the youngest members of this transnational migrant community, the aim of my research was to unravel the nexus between urban and international mobility and the transition from school education into the labour market.

Since the early days of fieldwork, recording videos with my smartphone became a central element of my research and eventually proved to be an indispensable methodological tool for the experimentation of participatory research approaches. As we will see, along this path videos came to represent both an alternative way to write a field diary; a means to engage the fluctuating interest of my research participants; and an experimental space of co-writing.

Building on an intense, erratic and many times improvised audio-visual research experience, this chapter offers a theoretically-informed empirical account of the failures, negotiations and opportunities disclosed by the use of participatory video-making in ethnographic research with underprivileged young people “affected by mobility” (Carrasco & Narciso, 2015). The first section lays the conceptual background for a broader reflection on the nexus between participatory and audio-visual methods: I discuss the advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of the former and address the practical and conceptual dilemmas raised by the co-creation of audio-visual products. The second section follows the invitation of Annalisa Frisina (2015) to tell more about the negotiations and the confrontations that underly the use of audio-visual methods and gives a detailed account of my efforts to combine both approaches. This path has been paved by a succession of optimistic advances, hopeful waits, unexpected slips, and humble retreats which

have allowed me to further develop my methodological posture and reflection. In light of the presented data, the conclusion substantiates two key hypotheses. First, I discuss how – even if the results are not as expected – audio-visual methods are a valuable pretext for engaging informants in participatory research practices as well as for digging into personal beliefs, feelings and associations that otherwise would remain hidden. In particular, I defend the value of *uncertainty, improvisation and failure in the making of participatory videos*, whereby precisely these complications are crucial to shorten distances and compensate for unequal power relations between researchers and their informants. Second, and similar to other contributions in this section, I discuss how *the use of participatory audio-visual methods in migration studies* can both help to mitigate the practical problems posed by remote data collection, and contribute to mainstream novel approaches to the study of migration.

10.2 Audio-Visual Research as a “Making Together”

The purpose of using videos for data collection and communication does not require any significant methodological approach *per se*: videos can be recorded without actively involving research participants or being edited for academic purpose only. However, when ethnographic movies are intended to contest hegemonic (mis)representations of a given social group or serve as an empowering tool, engaging research participants in the creative process is seen as a critical condition.

Some authors suggest that co-creating audio-visual texts allows ensuring spaces of legitimacy and communication to those subjects that rarely talk for themselves in the public sphere and are more often hetero-represented by others through colonial discourses and imaginaries (Lagomarsino, 2015; Queirolo Palmas, 2015). From this perspective, and in order to help these people to construct new narratives about themselves, researchers should “give back the power of representation [and] bet on research processes that are rather a making together” (Queirolo Palmas, 2015, p. 114). The success of these attempts, however, largely depends on the ability of scholars to challenge the positivist epistemology of distance and to completely (and truly) involve research participants in the writing process, even at the expenses of appearing “less scientific”. But what does this mean in practice?

Luisa Stagi (2015) describes the use of participatory methods as an essential condition for bringing together the *directivity* of video-editing with the *non-directivity* of biographical methods. During her research with female-to-male transitioning people, she realised that some requirements needed in the post-production process (mainly technical skills and availability of time) would have excluded almost by default her research participants from the construction of the story. In order to mitigate these risks and “dilute the power” of the researcher/director in selecting scenes and shaping representations, she arranged moments of collaboration already in the preproduction phase. These include activities aimed at co-writing the script or co-designing the structure of the video-interviews.

On other occasions, a higher involvement of the research participants is just a direct consequence of the employment of audio-visual tools. In fact, while more traditional means of data collection, like audio interviews, allow participants to use anonymity to mitigate their responsibility over their opinions (Stagi, 2015), appearing on camera tends to amplify their demand for control over the ways and forms in which their image is produced and reproduced (Queirolo Palmas, 2015). This fact alone triggers a more decisive request for participation in both phases of post-production and restitution than any other condition (Lagomarsino, 2015; Stagi, 2015).

The link between participatory and audio-visual methods may also work in reverse, with the latter becoming crucial for the former. White (2009) uses the expression “ethnography 2.0” to refer to the space of opportunities that the availability and development of digital technology has generated in the field of participatory ethnography. On the one hand, smartphones, digital cameras, and editing software allow participatory groups to work more independently on the collection and creation of audio-visual material, contributing to balancing the unequal relation between internal and external researchers. On the other hand, these tools express their potential, especially in participatory research experiences with underprivileged youth with trajectories of school failure. For them, the audio-visual text is far more attractive, understandable and connected to their daily life than the written one, which rather represents “the code of a control device that turns and classifies them into culturally disabled people, and the concrete sign of their own humiliation and failure” (Queirolo Palmas, 2015, p. 115).

10.2.1 Reasons and Problems of Conducting Participatory Research

Participatory research practices are expected to bring the perspective of both researcher and research participants together. In the words of María José Aguilar Idáñez (2016, p. 164) collaborative research is not about explaining *the* Other, but it is about “exploring together *with* the Other to reconstruct cultural experiences through dialogue”. Therefore, planning moments of cooperation meets the twofold purpose of establishing more equal power relations among the subjects involved in the research process and adapting the research agenda to the participant’s needs and interests (Zeitlyn & Mand, 2012).

When it comes to children, young people, and other groups defined as vulnerable, these processes have an added value: by taking advantage of the competencies and skills of the participants, they may represent an unparalleled measure of empowerment and contribute to breaking their representation as “vulnerable people”. Participatory approaches can be effective also in creating playful spaces of expression and communication away from pedagogical and adult-centric prescriptions. In this respect, Rachael Fox (2013) claims the need for a radical change in the

participatory ethnographic practices, pointing out how young participants often advocate for research that is funny and focuses on topics that are relevant to them. Other scholars, instead, emphasise how incorporating the perspective of children and young people in scholarly research may help to understand aspects of social life that would remain hidden without a certain distance from the conventions that shape “adult ideas about the world” (Milstein, 2010).

Conducting participatory research is nevertheless challenging. Regardless of good intentions, the imbalance between the investment of the researcher and the interest of the participants risks reproducing mechanisms of coercion and persuasion (Fox, 2013). As I had occasion to experience during my research, these tensions are mostly reflected in the design of the research questions before the beginning of the fieldwork; in the excess of planning by the researcher; in the pedagogical approach of the “participatory clubs”; and in the uncritical adoption of adult-centric ethical guidelines that – besides not to consider children as competent social actors – risk to reproduce pre-existing impotencies and absences (Campbell & Trotter, 2007; Fox, 2013; Sime, 2008; Skelton, 2008). It is perhaps due to the difficulty of remaining in the conventional formats of social research that according to Audrey Dentith, Measor, and O’Malley (2012) the most crucial risk faced by those scholars that may want to adopt *truly* participatory methodologies is to be excluded from academic and funding opportunities.

10.2.2 *Representation, Authorship and Self-Analysis*

The adoption of participatory approaches may disclose further dilemmas when combined with the creation of audio-visual products.

Co-creating audio-visual texts certainly allows the researcher to share the power of representation with the participants. However, when it comes to discriminated groups and individuals, putting them in the conditions to exercise control over their image may not bring the expected results. Researchers may assume that the self-representations of discriminated people are different and opposed to those produced by dominant discourses about them, and that if they only had the opportunity to express themselves publicly, they would put forward alternative narratives about themselves. Luca Queirolo Palmas (2015, p. 124), however, reveals how members of youth gangs in Barcelona “loved to publicly represent themselves, through texts and videos, in the wake of a *gangsta* imagery, which is basically the barbaric imagery through which the hegemonic discourse labels them”. Similarly, but with an opposite impact on public representation, the involvement of research participants in the post-production phase may trigger forms of censorship and neglect important sociological aspects (Cannarella, 2015).

Making a movie together also raises the issue of authorship. This question is not limited to the formal acknowledgement of the intellectual contribution of each person involved in the creative process but calls directly into question the very idea of participation. Participatory practices make the boundaries of ownership very

fluid for the simple reason that it is difficult to clearly identify “who made what”. When it comes to video-making, having a camera in hand does not mean to exert more decision-making power than the people performing on the other side of the lens. Similarly, being involved in the editing process does not always guarantee full control over the story. Therefore, what determines the degree of polyphony of an artefact are mainly the relations established within the participatory group. The elusiveness of authorship in the making of participatory films is well grasped in the description that Luca Queirolo Palmas (2015, p. 129) gives of the process that led to the production of *Buscando Respeto*: “Fragments of our discourses have penetrated the scene of the gangs as no book or sociological essay could have ever done; fragments of their viewing angles and their positions have pervaded our narrative. Who is the author, and what is the artefact?”

Finally, we have to consider the unexpected and sometimes counterintuitive impact of audio-visual methods on research processes. It is very common for scholars to assume that recording videos in the field may turn into an element of discomfort for the research participants. Against this posture, Karla Ballesteros Gómez (2012; in Lagomarsino, 2015) suggests that the camera can become an occasion for unleashing emotions because it generates a chance to be heard. Other authors have reported similar experiences, proving how participatory video-making can create a deep and critical reflective mechanism that amplifies and drags the participants towards crucial questions related to how their image is reproduced and made public (Lagomarsino, 2015; Stagi, 2015). In this context, it cannot be underestimated how the external and empathic gaze of the researcher/director may contribute to change the self-analytical perspective of the participants and push them to repopulate their self-perceptions with new meanings. As stated by Max, one of the female-to-male transitioning people interviewed by Luisa Stagi (2015, p. 50): “Through your empathic look we were able to reverberate our thinking, this led us to talk about things we had inside that we never said to each other: usually we talk about concrete things among ourselves”.

10.3 Experimental Collaborations

During my research, I have been experimenting with both the limitations and the transformative potentials associated with the adoption of participatory and audio-visual methods. In principle, this methodological choice was not based on any particular deontological or epistemological posture. When I started my fieldwork, I was not aware of the theoretical implications linked to the setting up of participatory research groups, neither was I conscious of how to use videos in anthropological enquiry. Quite the opposite (as I had to recognise when I read my field notes some time later) my approach was merely functional to reach the very practical purpose of accessing a wider sample of Romanian “Roma” youngsters living in homelessness in Madrid. And to do it as quickly as possible.

In June 2014, my only contact with this community of young people was a 13-year-old boy called Adrian.¹ After one of our first meetings, I asked him if he could introduce me to other adolescents with similar paths of urban and international mobility. By instinct, and without letting him answer, I suggested to him that we could interview them together. However spontaneous, my proposal was coherent with the awareness that the future of my doctoral research was largely dependent on his will and availability to help me. Offering Adrian to join my research project as a sort of assistant became an intuitive way to reframe my request for support and to balance my condition of dependency. My unexpressed purpose was to turn his extemporaneous “endorsement” to my research into something more durable and concrete through developing a bond of complicity and trust. The tactical nature of this operation never made me feel a worse anthropologist, but probably a less hypocrite one. Over time, however, I started interpreting and confiding to Adrian that our potential collaboration could have been interpreted as an exchange between people with different yet complementary expertise. The choice was now his hands.

The boredom of the summer days played in my favour. Following my request, he started organising meetings between his friends and me. During these reunions, structured interviews – that originally were not meant to be crucial to my methodology – proved to be a valuable tool for creating an operational framework for Adrian’s involvement in the research process. Previous to each interview, I would share with him a copy of the interview structure and invite him to ask some of the questions. Unlike participant observation, interviews also represented explicit moments of encounter that parents could easily recognise and give their consent to. These first attempts, however, failed for a number of reasons, among which it is worth highlighting some degree of unpreparedness on my side; the abstract language of the interview structure; and the priority I was giving to data collection over anything else. Despite these limitations, Adrian’s engagement in the conduction of interviews was priceless. Through his comments, specifications and sarcastic reactions he was able to transform the meetings with his friends into a dialogical space where personal fragments of their shared experiences of mobility could merge and give shape to collective memory and imagery.

Motivated by these early experiences, I started a path of collaboration that involved two co-researchers (Boylorn, 2008) in two transnational locations: Adrian in Madrid, and his close friend Leonard in their home village in Romania. The interviews conducted with their peers in both localities were open also to other young participants: everyone was listening and stepping in to clarify, dispute or contribute to the answers. Towards the end of each meeting, I invited everyone to ask their own questions with the twofold purpose of concluding the interview in a playful way and allowing topics I was overlooking, such as sexuality and romantic relationships, to emerge. Over time, this path of collaboration has adjusted to the specific competencies and interests of the co-inquirers and has also been accompanied and facilitated by the creation of videos, moving along the “ladder of

¹All the names of the research participants have been anonymized.

participation” defined by Hart (1993). While commissioning tasks, consulting and sharing decision-making have been the main ingredients of what I have called “experimental collaborations” (Piemontese, 2017; see also Estalella & Sánchez Criado, 2018) the horizon I was longing for – setting the ground for research initiated and directed by young people – was only partially achieved. Nevertheless, despite the entire process being based on a high degree of improvisation and experimentation, it is possible to identify three main phases: training, participation, and professionalisation.²

10.3.1 *From Commissioning Tasks to Research Training*

Living in Hungary but doing fieldwork between Spain and Romania has significantly affected the decision to experiment with participatory methods. My own trajectories of displacement pushed me to consider Adrian and Leonard as two privileged observers of geographically distant realities and communities that I could not witness on a daily basis. Despite myself, the absence from the field (which did not exist during the first months of research) was preventing me from building stronger relationships with other young participants in both locations. Consequently, I convinced myself that a more active involvement of Adrian and Leonard could have become the safest way to gather data and succeed in my research. At that time, however, the question of how to involve them in this process was still unanswered.

As a first step, I decided to share with them some basic information about the formats of academic research and the methods of ethnographic inquiry. I considered essential to frame our relation in the context of a broader system of knowledge production that, despite the claims to social change and social justice, mainly results in publications, conferences and job contracts of which they were only going to be passive protagonists. Afterwards, while structured interviews continued to represent recognisable moments of collaboration, I started introducing Adrian and Leonard to the method of participant observation. These training activities were carried out mainly spontaneously. For instance, the very first time I invited Adrian to accompany me on fieldwork with people other than his close friends was after reading a *tweet* of the local anti-eviction movement. A Romanian family was about to be evicted from its apartment, so I called Adrian, and we reached the site together. Since the police had not arrived yet, we were invited by the householder to join him for a coffee. Then, when a couple of hours later we left the apartment, I decided to encourage some reflections on what we had actually done:

«You know, my job, more or less, works like that: the first thing to do is to ask questions about the topic you are interested in. Then, there is a second important thing to do: if we had

²The involvement of Adrian and Leonard as co-inquirers has been voluntarily from the very beginning. However, throughout the research I have first contributed to the purchasing of two smartphones equipped with cameras, and successively rewarded the ethnographic work carried out by Leonard. These expenses were covered using my salary.

time we should sit down and write what has happened this morning, including the information Nelu gave to us». Adrian is particularly interested in this aspect: «What should we write?», he asks. «It depends on our interest», I answer. «The main point is that the more stories you collect, the more you can say something about a topic». I predict what Adrian is going to say, so I anticipate him: «It’s weird to go back home and write things about the people you’ve had a coffee with, right?». He smiles: «Yes, a little bit». «In a sense, it’s like being a spy ... or at least this is what they would think if they knew that we write about them, right?». He agrees. So I continue: «And this is the reason why one of the basic rules that you have to comply with is to make always clear who you are. Did you notice that at the beginning I told Nelu about my research, that I was a scholar and you were my research assistant?» (Fieldnotes, 3rd July 2015)

Asking Adrian what could have happened “if they knew what we write” (Brettell, 1993) was not simply a way of making him aware of the ethical issues surrounding the ethnographic method: I was also telling him that I was constantly writing about him and his friends. Unexpectedly, our experimental collaborations were offering the space to address some ethical issues that had not been completely faced in the initial stage of my fieldwork.

Regarding the use of videos, at this stage they were still separated from my participatory attempts. Nonetheless, three genres had already emerged, that anticipated my subsequent efforts to combine audio-visual and participatory practices: fiction, video interviews, and the ethnographic documentary. At that time, I was not aware of the multiple implications of recording videos during the fieldwork, so without giving much thinking I had started filming Adrian, Leonard and his brother Nicolae on a daily basis. Accustomed as they were to shoot videos of themselves, they immediately felt at ease in front of the camera. One afternoon, the four of us were walking across the neighbourhood when I shared with them the idea to make a movie together. I had nothing planned yet, but they liked the idea and immediately started to develop and perform a story of thieves, fights, secret police, and family unity. When a couple of days later I edited the scenes in chronological order, we were all surprised by the result: we had filmed a *gangsta*-themed short movie (Fig. 10.1). In that moment, I understood that video-making could be much more eloquent than any other source of data and could also represent a playful and engaging way of conducting research with my young participants. After this revealing experience, I invited them to show me the places they had been living since their arrival in Madrid: abandoned yards, ruined buildings and ordinary blocks became the scenery in which Leonard was describing to an imaginary audience the living conditions and the forced evictions that he and his young friends had been experiencing during the previous years (Fig. 10.2). When he moved back to Romania, we continued video-recording interviews on different topics but, as the fieldwork was moving ahead, I also started collecting a third and more extemporary kind of video material: that for an ethnographic documentary (Fig. 10.3).



Fig. 10.1 Nicolae and Adrian performing the “bad guys” in our gangsta-themed short movie, Madrid 2014



Fig. 10.2 Leonard describes the consequences of forced evictions in front of the remains of a building where he had been living illegally with his family for a couple of years, Madrid 2014



Fig. 10.3 Following Leonard after a day of work in the construction, Medgidia 2016

10.3.2 Towards More Autonomous Forms of Participatory Data Collection

The silence of Adrian and Leonard that too often accompanied our improvised training sessions revealed their perplexity in front of an ocean of amorphous words that rarely resulted in concrete actions. I had the impression that I was imposing my concerns on them without leaving them enough space for contributing with their own doubts, interests, and questions to a common research agenda: the main protagonist of our collaborations was still me. The event that made me aware of this situation took place a few months after our *gangsta*-themed short movie, when I invited Adrian to film his summer trip to Romania with his smartphone. I had imagined that my proposal would have been a good opportunity to extend my participatory approach to the use of videos. But then he asked, “Then I am Stefano, right?” and I did not know whether to feel pleased or downhearted. If on the one hand, I was afraid of “assimilating” him – not exactly the process I was hoping to generate – on the other hand, his response could have interpreted as a sign of empowerment, whereby the creation of an audio-visual diary represented an opportunity for Adrian to increase his self-esteem as a competent person. Whatever the correct interpretation was, I understood that something had to be changed. This happened when the advancement in my research rescued me from the bulimia of ethnographic data and enabled me to put into practice the purpose I had previously recorded in my diary:

I have always been critical about the opportunity of letting them develop their own research questions, mainly because I feared that they would not fit in my research. I always tried to encourage their collaborative potential, but always within the limits of my research

questions. I do not want to radically change this approach now, but to complement it with a more participatory one. (Fieldnotes, 2rd July 2015)

My cynical self was still interpreting participatory methods as a means to engage the fluctuating interest of my informants. However, as I was progressing with my research, I started to emancipate myself from such a narrow-minded vision. I finally learned to listen and to appreciate their active involvement as a prism through which I could better comprehend their world. Actions like conducting interviews together, taking decisions on the sample, or sharing reflections about the fieldwork became the fundamental elements of a shared space of co-creation, negotiation, and “mutual gaze” (Paloma Gay y Blasco, 2017). With regard to the use of videos, after our *gangsta*-themed short movie, I was left with the impression that the enthusiasm and the creative inspiration of my co-inquirer had already vanished. The documentary-like videos that I kept recording were neither initiated nor explicitly directed by them. However, their presence on the scene was anything but passive: Adrian, Leonard and Nicolae were making decisions on the attitudes they wanted to perform; the messages they wanted to communicate to the audience; and the private moments they wanted to make public. Sometimes I had the impression that I was the passive observer in charge of following them with the camera while they were performing their own script (see also Desille, Chap. 4, in this volume).

These reflections pushed me to reconsider our experimental collaborations as an opportunity to bring to light a range of skills, competencies and expertise they were endowed with, but that were silenced in the public sphere. Leonard, who was described as a lazy student and a class bully by his mother and teachers, in the time we spent together proved to be a sharp para-ethnographer (Holmes & Marcus, 2008) and a talented actor. Therefore, I imagined that if we had structured our collaborative sessions in a more consistent way, and if I had pushed them towards more autonomous forms of data collection, they would have had the opportunity to test themselves against a new and thrilling activity; increase their self-esteem; and consider the intellectual work as a feasible and desirable horizon. This attempt has involved both the conduction of interviews and the use of videos (Fig. 10.4).

To start with, I organised some working sessions with Adrian in Spain and Leonard in Romania. The purpose was to adjust the research questions to their own interests and to provide them with the skills to conduct interviews on their own. We first edited the interview structure in a more accessible language and, by testing it with me, they learned how to conduct interviews (Fig. 10.5). Then, I invited them to develop their own research questions. At this point, while Adrian chose to keep playing his comfortable role of “executive producer” of my research (i.e. facilitating the organisation of meetings and interviews with peers, educators, and social workers), Leonard committed himself to the proposed plan with dedication and started designing his own questions. There was an important biographical element behind this choice: returning to his home village had confronted him with an unfamiliar environment he was seeking to re-appropriate. Leonard’s questions were about the recent history of the village and the origins of the ethnic divides that shaped the relations among its inhabitants.



Fig. 10.4 Snowfall in a video recorded by Leonard, Călărași County 2015

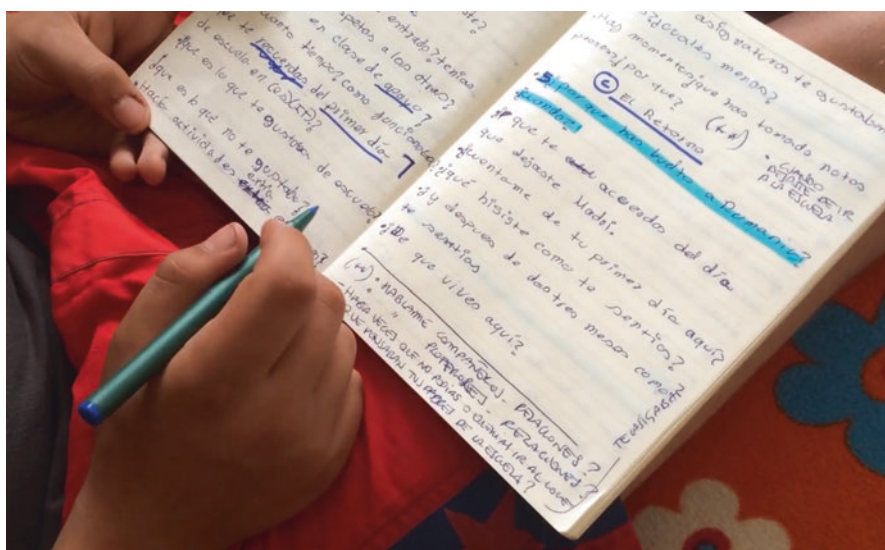


Fig. 10.5 Leonard rewriting the interview structure, Călărași County 2015

Considering his growing interest in exploring the dynamics of remigration and separation, I invited Leonard to work on a script for a documentary movie about the experience of return. I suggested to him that he could use his smartphone to narrate the daily life of his brother Nicolae who, like him, was caught between the strive to

integrate into the Romanian rural economy and the desire to move back to Spain. In that period, we used to call each other every week, and even if I was living in Hungary, I believed that we would be able to achieve something even by phone. For a couple of weeks, we developed a story, imagining scenes, dialogues and locations. However, due to his daily commitments, constraints, and hesitations as well as to the impossibility of materialising our ideas in the near future, we did not move forward with this idea. Downhearted by the lack of progress, and definitively aware that the co-creation of videos required personal meetings and a greater follow-up, I invited Leonard and Adrian to record “any video” as if they were to write a diary in images (Allen, 2008). I contributed to purchase two new smartphones because those they used so far were shared with other family members, and after some weeks I started receiving scenes of young people riding bikes in the parks of Madrid, working in the fields close to the banks of the Danube, or enjoying the abundant Romanian snowfalls (Fig. 10.4). For the first time, I saw their world through their eyes. But, again, these videos were the result of unstructured initiatives that relied too much on the extemporary motivation of my co-researchers. This attempt also failed.

10.3.3 Professionalisation: Structuring and Rewarding Collaboration

For Leonard, returning to the home village also corresponded to a decline in his purchasing power. The pension of invalidity of his seriously ill mother could not meet the basic needs of the family and much less satisfy the consumption habits that her children had been accustomed to in Spain. Their subsistence was ensured by the loans of the local grocery stores and a transnational support network that included relatives and friends. Despite some initial doubts, I had also started to contribute to their precarious livelihood with occasional remittances. I found it in line with my custom of expressing gratitude to my research participants through small gifts and invitations. The conflicts that arose between me, Leonard and his brother Nicolae around the amount of these contributions did not prevent me from supporting their family. In fact, the chance to conduct fieldwork in Romania was largely based on the availability of their mother to have me as a host.

These conditions changed with the arrival of the second winter, when Leonard started demanding money more often than usual, sometimes speaking in his name, sometimes interpreting the very needs of his household. In that period, he and his brother had no job, nor any other option than waiting for the summer to be employed in seasonal works. Therefore, since I would have transferred Leonard some money anyway, and because he was already 16 years old, I tried to turn this despairing situation into an opportunity for both of us: I offered him a job. We multiplied the firewood price by the tons needed for the whole winter and concluded that his household would have needed a given amount of money for the following months. I agreed that I would have transferred this amount from my own pocket in monthly rates and that these donations should have been considered as an economic compensation for the



Fig. 10.6 Leonard reading and analysing the written notes he took during the interviews he conducted in his village, Călărași County 2016

conduction of interviews based on the structure we had developed together. We informed his mother, and Leonard promised her that he would have contributed to the domestic economy with half of his “income”. From an ethical point of view, the fact of having developed our relationship voluntarily and prior to such deal pushed me to consider my proposal a way of empowering Leonard and giving dignity to his work: I was recognising and remunerating his competences, nothing more and nothing less. During the following months, he conducted eight interviews with Roma and non-Roma people living in his home village. In the beginning my suggestion was of video-recording these talks, but I had reckoned neither with the reluctance of the interviewees to be filmed for a research they knew little about, nor with Leonard’s autonomy to make his own methodological choices according to the context. Therefore, the use of video was limited to the co-analysis of the written notes Leonard had diligently taken during each interview (Fig. 10.6).

The fact that a more structured approach led to concrete results with Leonard convinced me that I could adopt a similar *modus operandi* with Adrian in Madrid. Unlike his friend, he was not very interested in conducting interviews, but he was attracted by the idea of shooting videos. Consequently, towards the end of my fieldwork, I made the last attempt to involve him in the creation of a participatory documentary movie. I first presented my project to the local anti-eviction assembly and booked a space where to organise our audio-visual club, and then met Adrian to set the work schedule. We made a list of the potential protagonists and agreed on the potential structure of the film: the actors would have worked in couples, each of them filming the partner for a whole day. By way of exercise, I asked Adrian to sketch the traits of the potential actors: he described Andrei, who loved dancing;

Mihai, who enjoyed riding his bike through the district; and Darius, who was famous for spending his nights watching television; among the girls, Geta was popular for writing romantic sentences on Facebook; while her sister Raluca aimed at more and was constantly looking for a job as a care worker. After a few minutes, Adrian stops and stares at me. Two characters are missing:

«And now it's your turn», he says. I did not realise that I could be one of his protagonists. I answer: «It's true, what ... what do you think of me?». He is a bit of embarrassed, then he goes: «Well, you're interested in things. You have a passion to know things», and after a pause he continues: «Now it's my turn: "how do you see me?"», he asks. I feel the same embarrassment: «Well, it's hard! I know you pretty much now. Uhm, you're a boy who basically gets bored. But from outside you seem to adopt adult roles». (Fieldnotes, 29th October 2015)

Unfortunately, the audio-visual club never started. Beyond any complacent narration about my research being participatory and audio-visual, I continued to prioritise more traditional ways of writing ethnography. Compared to the beginning of my fieldwork, I was certainly less anxious to consolidate my relationship with the research participants, but now I was feeling the pressure to start writing my thesis. Moreover, I had underestimated the element that partly determined the success of my collaboration with Leonard and that appears to be fundamental for involving on a regular basis people living in precarious economic conditions: the economic reward. The lesson learned by this succession of false starts is that, in order to carry out a research that aims at combining audio-visual and participatory methods, it is necessary to commit to this plan from the very beginning.

Then, is there no value in failure and improvisation?

10.4 Conclusive Remarks

Recent developments in digital technology have enabled an increasing number of social scientists to create audio-visual products with more ease than before. The opportunity to record, edit, and broadcast videos even in the absence of high professional skills has revealed the potential of this tool as a means to collect data and communicate scholarly research through a more compelling and engaging format. At the same time, however, the lack of academic training in this field has put many of us in front of another range of questions: Which is the place of images and videos in our research? And how is it possible to combine audio-visual writing with the traditional formats, competences, and methods of scholarly research? The delay in response risks relegating the apprentice filmmaker in the uncomfortable halfway position between the amateur taste of films with no appeal for the general public, and the colleagues' reprimand for wasting time in "non-scientific" and, career-wise, pointless activities. However, I argue, it is precisely this sense of inadequacy that may disclose unexpected conceptual and methodological advancements.

The "trial and error procedure" that guided my endeavour to combine participatory and audio-visual methods has significantly contributed to shortening the

distance with my research participants. The fact that I was not sure of how to use videos; that I did not make accurate methodological choices; and that I was proceeding mainly by mistakes, was critical to balance the unequal relations within the participatory group. Luca Queirolo Palmas (2015) suggests that assuming the role of the film director allows scholars to get rid of what is perceived to be a distant and useless intellectual culture, and to come closer to their participants. To this, we can add that unpreparedness, indecision, and failure are fundamental ingredients of the co-writing process as they truly promote the creation of non-hierarchical relations.

“Lacking a plan”, however, also meant that the vast majority of the videos recorded during my research does not differ much from the traditional format of the ethnographic documentary, with its protagonists being followed at a distance by the researcher/director. Against this impression, it must be said that even though the young people appearing in these videos have not been directly involved in their creation, through their performance, they have meaningfully contributed to writing their own script and, on some occasions, new imaginaries about themselves. Their control over the story has fluctuated between film direction and improvisation acting: while the *gangsta*-themed short movie has condensed various nuances of authorship – with the protagonists combining in a few minutes production, direction, and acting – in most occasions they preferred to be followed by the camera in their daily activities, and to continuously oscillate between fiction and reality. These interactions raise fundamental questions about the boundaries of authorship and participation. Is performing in front of the camera a process of co-writing? Did we actually write videos together?

Similar to other contributions in this volume, this chapter has also addressed the methodological and theoretical implications linked to the use of audio-visual methods in migration studies. Existent literature tends to consider this nexus either in terms of representation of the migrants or in terms of the methodological choice of following migrants with the camera to better understand a phenomenon that is multi-located and in motion. There is no doubt that both understandings have been relevant to my research: for my co-inquirers, holding me back from recording scenes that they considered reproducing negative imagery about Roma was a way to avoid stereotyped representations about this group; in the same way, following Leonard in Romania has allowed me to grasp return migration from the perspective of one of its young protagonists. Nevertheless, there are two further methodological implications that have to be considered in relation to the act of visualising migration. First, adopting participatory audio-visual methods can be a useful stratagem both to mitigate the problems created by the geographical distance between external and internal researcher, and to balance the power relations within the participatory group. Nowadays, the use of smartphones and cloud computing allows co-researchers to work more independently on the collection of audio-visual data, consenting the main researcher to be “here and there” at the same time, but also expropriating them from the monopoly of data collection, thus providing the condition for truly participatory research practices, in particular with young people with low literacy skills. Second, if we consider that social categories are based on observable circumstances and therefore can be better understood through images (Harper,

1988), video-making bears the potential of conveying new understandings of the migration phenomenon, and not a mere description thereof. Reproducing the disordered fragments of the transnational and translocal subjectivity of underprivileged young Europeans “affected by mobility” into new imagery of migration that blurs the distinction between urban, domestic and international moves can be a next challenge for audio-visual migration research.

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Chapter 11

Photovoice as a Research Tool of the “Game” Along the “Balkan Route”



Karolína Augustová

11.1 Introduction

Migratory pathways across the borders of South Eastern Europe have been commonly recognised within public and policy discourses as the “Balkan Route” (Frontex, 2018; UNHCR, 2019). Yet those pathways do not follow one linear route across the official border checkpoints of former Yugoslav states – Serbia and Bosnia, to the European Union – Croatia and Hungary (Obradovic-Wochnik & Bird, 2019; Stojić & Vilenica, 2019). As often encountered by displaced populations, the journeys consist of perpetually moving onward and being pushed backward across diverse European towns, highways, mountains, forests, rivers, minefields, and camps, necessary to cross to reach western or northern Europe. Displaced people stranded in Serbia and Bosnia generally call their border crossing attempts the “game”; the term that conveys the daily mobility struggles, violence and deaths.

Although the “Balkan Route” has served as the transitory point for migration and smuggling to western and northern Europe (Ahmetašević & Mlinarević, 2019) for centuries, it reached its visibility in 2015/2016, when hundreds of thousands of displaced people walked through here while searching for protection in the EU (Cocco, 2017). However, the passage soon became entangled with the EU’s political sentiments against immigration, while repeatedly picturing those seeking protection as a “security threat” (Dobrevá & Radjenovic, 2018). For example, the far-right United Kingdom Independence Party called for “taking back control of the EU’s borders” when releasing an anti-immigration poster “Breaking Point”;

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depicting thousands of refugees walking from Croatia to Slovenia (Steward & Mason, 2015). In 2015, Hungary constructed an US\$80 million razor wire fence along its southern borders, marking the EU-entry point from Serbia (Thorleifsson, 2017). What followed to further close the “Balkan Route” was the deal between the EU and Turkey (Cocco, 2017), as well as Croatia restricting its own borders with Serbia and later with Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Despite the route’s closure, daily movement across Serbian and Bosnian borders onwards showed that the routes continued to be active. Militant and legislative border closures only made the migratory movements irregular, more hazardous and expensive, particularly for male migrants, who appeared on the bottom of support priorities (Arsenijević et al., 2018). The year of the “Balkan Route closure” (2016), Frontex detected 130,325 unauthorised entries from Serbia to Croatia and Hungary (Frontex, 2018). The responses to the border crossers by Hungarian and Croatian state authorities consisted of denial of asylum application and collectively expulsing them to the states of their departure (Arsenijević et al., 2018), commonly with the use of violence (Augustová & Sapoch, 2020). Despite violent border deterrents, all residing in Serbian and Bosnian camps hoped to transit undetected and reach the EU, which they believed was possible only while playing the “games”.

Numerous scholars explored harms in migration, when paying attention particularly to structural violence: the one that is embedded in unequal state rules (Ansems de Vries & Guild, 2018; Fassin, 2011; Jones, 2019; Mbembe, 2003; Sayad, 2004; Vaughan-Williams, 2015), disruption of landscape border crossing channels (Stojić & Vilenica, 2019), denial to be saved when drowning in the sea (Cuttitta, 2018; Little & Vaughan-Williams, 2017; Squire, 2017; Stierl, 2018), and enclosure in inhospitable living spaces (Davies, Isakjee, & Dhesi, 2017; Laurie & Shaw, 2018; Mould, 2018; Salvador, 2017). However, direct border violence have predominantly been the focus of activist and NGO’s research rather than academic research (No Name Kitchen, 2019; Border violence monitoring, 2019; Amnesty International, 2019; UNHCR, 2019). This is where I wish to make the empirical contribution with my research, exploring the daily negotiations of violent mobility obstacles as experienced and understood by people most subjected to them – generally, displaced men playing the “games”.

To this end, I conducted one year of ethnographic fieldwork in South Eastern Europe, in Serbia (June – August 2017 and January 2018) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (June 2018 – January 2019), while providing aid with solidarity activists in various camps. In Serbia, I combined ethnographic research tools with participatory photographic methods – *photovoice* (Wang & Burris, 1997). As photographed *by* and interpreted *with* the displaced men, the “game” became the vector into their daily mobility struggles and violence. This chapter aims to reflect on the photographic methodologies used in violence migration research and their abilities to sensitively explore the world of “games” as based on cooperation. The main contribution to this book therefore focuses on the visual participation of people who have embodied experiences of migration and violence while questioning: “What are the security, ethical and methodological implications of participants being *in front of* camera versus *behind* camera?” and “to what extent does photovoice provide insight into

everyday violent spaces that are restricted to access due to positionality, ethical and legal issues?”

This chapter is divided into three parts. Letting participants photograph and interpret their images became the tools of understanding the research objectives. Albeit, visual collaboration happened to be the focal methodology as the result of daily rethinking presence and position of (my) camera at the borders, which are sensitive, securitised and quickly evolving fields. The first part reflects on how I encountered migratory spaces in Serbia with my camera and explains why I eventually utilised photovoice. In the second part, I provide methodological explanations about photovoice: how it was used in the research, with whom it was conducted, and how the participants were selected in line with ethical and legal (visual) research. The chapter then goes on to the presentation of participants’ photographic data and discusses these within the methodological implications of photovoice. I argue that photovoice in combination with ethnography enables to enter the participants’ daily events of “games”, which I as a researcher could not otherwise access due to the barriers of state-rules, different positionalities and ethical issues. The final part discusses the implications and limitations of the participatory visual methodology.

11.2 “Who Is Behind Camera?”: Reflecting Photography Along Borders

When arriving in Serbia, I encountered the migratory routes and camps with a camera in my hand to capture the visual memos. However, I soon found the researcher-led photography problematic as it posed questions regarding methodological restriction and research ethics. Firstly, I faced the tacit dilemma of conducting (photographic) research in an authoritarian and securitised field (Gentile, 2013) – formal accommodation centres. Here, the state authorities forbade photography taking, besides closely following my movement. So, I avoided using my camera there to not lose access. In contrast, no state authority was present in makeshift camps and squats, except occasional police raids. Although the makeshift accommodations were the only spaces where the displaced people could rest and live their everyday and intimate moments, they were not considered as their private properties in legal terms. For this reason, movements across makeshift camps were not restricted. This provided an opportunity for photojournalists on their missions to capture stories of violence and misery. While professional photography is crucial to explore what images can tell public and social scientists about more ambiguous aspects of life at borders, to be able to do so, it needs to be established based on the dignity of the subjects and cooperation with them for extended period (Langmann & Pick, 2014). However, photography practices in Serbia often omitted collaboration with the displaced population due to the limited time that photojournalists spent in the field. They also lacked considerations of how their photography impacted on life and action at borders.

Most photographers seemed to have preconceived understandings of how to visualise deprivations from the most dramatic angles to satisfy the media demands, without paying attention to identities and visual accuracy of their subjects. Photographers were daily stepping into makeshift camps with no consent or empathy when taking images of displaced persons' faces, injured bodies from police attacks, or asking them to pose with their destroyed possessions, and then, disappearing. For example, Imad¹ said during our conversation: "*She [the photojournalist] came and just took many photos of my injuries and my face, although I said no face. After, she sat in a café, edited her photos and left back to the US. How does this help me? She knew nothing about me*". This and other similar practices posed questions regarding informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, power positionalities and, dignity of the people being photographed. The displaced people were hiding their camps' locations as they feared police violence and evictions. Some men also said during our conversations that their families were not aware of their living situations as they felt ashamed to tell them. The previous research in the Calais camp found similar findings when people avoided to be photographed by journalists and described "don't want my mother to see me like this" (Davies et al., 2017, p. 1271). Hence, photography capturing the men's identifying features and locations exposed them to risks and were entangled with sensibilities ignored by cameras pointing at them. Those who happened to be in the locus of camera objectives had often limited or no power over the photography's depiction, but also interpretation, dissemination and profit.

For these reasons, a camera in the hands of "strangers" presented distrust. While some men cooperated with journalists, many left their shelters when journalists arrived, covered their faces, ignored them, or reacted with anger. Although the photographic media coverage of migration highlighted humanitarian issues and developed pressure on policy makers, the visual data collection process was often problematic. Another issue of taking photographs "from the outside" identified along borders was related to border surveillance techniques. Frontex as well as Croatian and EU's state authorities daily use drones, satellite images, CCTV, thermal cameras and radars to detect, stop and violently deter the "game" mobility, as reported by state authorities and displaced population during interviews. Repeated episodes of being demeaned and oppressed by "outside" cameras resulted in displaced people's resistance to being photographed. The camera was, therefore, reconstructed in camps from the tool leading to awareness and positive global impact into a dangerous and exploitative object. This has already been pointed to by Sontag (1977, 2003), who raised the issue of power and danger of photography when she called a camera in the hands of strangers as an aggressive object, which does not provide us with understanding of violent fields. Lack of collaboration with those being photographed does not only result in their lack of control over photography itself but also over what is perceived to exist in (violent) migration worlds (Butler, 2009).

¹All participants' names have been changed in the text to protect their identities.

Since researchers are responsible for visual practices and representations as much as journalists (Desille & Nikielska-Sekula, Chap. 1, in this volume), the research-led photography became distorted as the research method in camps due to serious security and moral implications on the ground. I did not want to be associated with exploitative and merely Euro-centred visual conceptualisation of what life was like at the borders. Instead, I wished to explore peoples’ (photographic) perceptions and interpretations and develop cooperation with trust. For this reason, I gave up on taking photographs by myself. Instead, I paid attention to photographs produced by the displaced men as these captured their worlds’ according to their own understandings. It was not difficult to access such images as most people living in the camps said to daily photograph their journeys on smartphones, which they had carried on them to communicate with families and smugglers as well as to navigate the foreign terrains (e.g. GPS, translation). Recent research mentioned refugees taking photos on smartphones to preserve memories of their journeys to Europe (Alencar, Kondova, & Ribbens, 2018; Gillespie, Osseiran, & Cheesman, 2018). However, it did not consider the self-directed images as a tool of exploration of violent mobility obstacles, which I found out to be a crucial reason for displaced population taking photos. People in the camps photographed difficult terrains, violence, perilous camps’ conditions while trying to resist these and gain more protection, as the data will show. Since the self-directed images were omitted in violence and migration studies despite its rich information about the issue, I wished to place them in the study locus, with the men’s consent. To grasp more complexity about migration and violence within the everyday moments along the borders, I further asked the men whether they wished to borrow my camera and take more photos and they agreed.

11.3 Photovoice Methodology

Letting participants take photographs, with only limited instructions, is a visual participatory research method called *photovoice*, developed by Wang and Burris (1997), and used by numerous scholars researching migration (Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey, & Cekic, 2001; Green & Kloos, 2009; Gilhooly & Lee, 2017; Lenette & Boddy, 2013; Okigbo, Reiersen, & Stowman, 2009; Piemontese, Chap. 10, in this volume; Schwartz, Sable, Dannerbeck, & Campbell, 2007). When using photovoice, the men in this research could decide and manage via their images *what* they wanted people see and *how* they saw it (Pilcher, 2012). Such an approach increased participants control over the research themes and legitimised their unique vision of realities at the borders. Since the images were unexpected and unforeseen, I could enter a gateway beyond their own naturalised ideology and consciousness about other human beings’ everyday worlds (Bourdieu, 2012; Mannay, 2010; Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2010). Following the suggestions by Wang and Burris (1997), I further used *photo-elicitation*; the collaborative reflective discussions over images to explore the men’s subjective narratives associated with visuals. Photo-taking and

photo-elicitation due to their participatory nature, therefore, promised to challenge the main issues that appeared in the researcher-led photography: using camera as a predatory object, excluding the men from photographic process, representations and meaning makings about violent immobility, based merely on researcher's presumptions.

Participants were selected on the basis of circumstance and using a snowball sampling technique. As previously pointed out, I used the photovoice in combination with three months of participant observation in Serbian camps, which enabled to engage with the life at the borders and meet potential participants. After providing aid in the camps for several weeks, I approached the male inhabitants, with whom I established living and working relations with trust. I explained to them the purpose of my research and asked them whether they wished to collaborate. Some shared with me their images on their smartphones, while spending time together in the camps, during which I asked them whether they were interested to use their images for the research purpose as well as to take more photos and elicit them. The men agreed and further networked me with other camp cohabitants, about whom they knew that they were taking photos of their journeys or would be interested to do so. Eventually, 17 men from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria, between 17 and 28 years old became photographers and collaborative narrators in the research.

Since consent is the crucial principle of ethical visual research (British Sociological Association and VSSG, 2006; Papademas and International Visual Sociology Association, 2009), I obtained oral consent from the men to participate in the study. I avoided written consent as it was inappropriate in the context and developed customs along migratory routes (Langmann & Pick, 2014). Participants said they repeatedly sign forms that had undermined their rights and mobility; when being forcibly moved from makeshift camps to detention centres, apprehended in border zones, or arrested in police stations during the "games". Consequently, the men had developed distrust in signing official-looking documents, and for this reason, it was avoided in the research. Furthermore, written consent would contain their real names and signatures, which would undermine their anonymity. Instead, I dedicated weeks to establish dialogue and trust with the participants and in details discussed with them the research to later obtain their autonomous oral consent. Consent was however re-negotiated when moving to photo-elicitations and decision-making about dissemination of photographs.

Some participants decided to take photos for one or few days and others continued taking images for weeks/months on their smartphones. In total, the men took 487 images. The images were discussed during both individual and collective photo-elicitations, based on the men's choice. During the photo-elicitation, I posed two core questions to the photographers: "What is happening in the photo?" and "Why did you take a photo of this?", letting the men control further discussions. With respect to their legal rights as owners of the images, the men were asked whether to keep or destroy the photographs after the photo-elicitation. Participants had choice to select the images as well as their titles for academic publications. While following standards what to display (Nikielska-Sekula, Chap. 2, this volume), I suggested to use those that did not contain any identifying features and those

that the men assigned rigorous narratives, and they agreed. With the oral consent of my participants, these images are presented in this chapter. While the images depicted diverse sur-faces, the photo-elicitations surprised when the men mostly connected the image locus to the narratives of the “game”. The following section presents the men’s photographs and interpretations, while discussing to what extent photovoice provides the insight into their world of “games” that are challenging to access due to diverse positionalities, legal and ethical issues.

11.4 “I Took a Photo of the “Game” Because I Wanted to Show You My Life Here”

The English word “game” was so familiarised among diverse communities in camps that I could hear it even when the men were communicating in their mother tongues, with smugglers, and aid providers. The “game” became an ordinary term at the borders, albeit, its meaning was entangled in extraordinary painful experiences. I wanted to be mindful of the men’s sensibilities and traumas involved in their cross-border journeys, and for this reason, I had struggled to openly question them about the “games”. However, when they positioned the “game” in the visual research locus, their images opened our discussions over this term and its meanings. During the photo-elicitations, the men often pointed to undertaking risks, winning and losing while crossing borders, upon which they constructed the term “game”. For instance, Ali said: *“You know, this [border crossing] is like the “game” because it is risky. It is like a video game. You fail and start playing again, fail and again, fail and again until you win”*. The men also pointed to various rules and strategies that needed to be understood prior to winning: *“Border crossing is like the “game” because you need to understand its rules and theory if you want to win”* (Fareed). Finally, the word “game” also served to minimise the association of border crossing with danger and better cope with its difficult process. When taking about the “game”, many smiled or laughed, although the images captured difficult moments: *“It is just the “game” [laugh]. That is why we call it “game”. It is nothing else. [...] You have to win otherwise nothing will change. That’s it”* (Hasseb). These glimpses of photo-elicitation indicate that the participants’ images provided a gateway to the world of the “games”, which I could discuss, see and feel closer. To this end, the participant-made images began our conversation about the sensitive topic of “games”, and that under the men’s control of visual depictions, terminologies and meaning makings.

The most common focus that the participants decided to photograph were their daily routines within diverse transient accommodations; “jungles”, “barracks”, tents, shelters, makeshift kitchens, bedrooms, dining rooms, and playgrounds as well as state-run camps. Since the men could carry their smartphones or a small digital camera and take photographs anywhere at any time, the photographs provided insight into spaces, where I had forbidden or restricted access to. These were

particularly rub halls, where the men were accommodated in state-run accommodation centres, and makeshift camps in the night-time. While most images seemed mundane and innocent at first, participants often assigned to them unexpected stories that showed hidden preparations for the “games”. For instance, Fareed, took the photograph of his two friends, sitting on their beds in the rub hall in the night: *“We cannot sleep in the night. It is too hot and loud. But also, smugglers come to the camp in night. Night is the time for planning. ... I am always prepared, download offline maps, have compass, study terrain. You must be clever and make strategies and cooperate with others”* (Fareed). Fareed through his photography pointed to the theoretical preparations and social connections as fundamental strategies for the “game”. Since I could not enter the rub hall and see the night life in the camps, these were strange and unknown to me within my ethnographic research. However, the men’s photographs made the “strange familiar” (Bolton, Pole, & Mizen, 2001).

The photovoice also worked vice versa; “making the familiar practices strange again” (Mannay, 2010). Participants photographed various daily practices, which they had routinised and perceived them as ordinary: eating, praying, resting, exercising, and calling on a phone. I was regularly observing these seemingly innocent practices, without assigning them any special meanings or border mobility negotiations. However, the men connected these to their physical and mental preparations prior to attempting the border crossing. For instance, Hassed said: *“We exercise a lot to be fit and be able to walk for days and weeks and to run in the jungle [forest]. We also rest and pray the day before the “game””*. Hence, the images shed new light on the daily routines in camps, for both me and the men. The photo-elicitation processes made the men to re-think the meanings and repetitions of their daily routines, as well as my observations, when connecting them to broader narrative of the world, in which they had been stranded. In this way, participatory visual methodologies resulted in portraying and understanding of border violence through the everyday and ordinary rather than only extreme events and visual stereotypes, such as injuries and stories scored with remarkable practices of border guards or poverty in camps. If only research-led photography would be used, the men’s ordinary and intimate visual angles of immobility would be lacking, in which stems the strength of photovoice.

The scenes of “games” across the photographs were repetitive and captured a predominantly masculine experience. When we were discussing what was driving the “game” repetitions and why it was gendered, the men connected these to border policies and states’ rules. The men believed that the “game” presented the only means of escaping a life of deprivations in camps and of reaching their destination: *“We cannot just stay in the camp and wait. We have been here over ten months, and nothing happened. The Commissariat [for Refugees and Migration Republic of Serbia, managing camps] laughed at me that I don’t have any chance to legally cross because I am a single [man]”* (Basir). Five participants also pointed that they had tried to negotiate the legal access to the two Hungarian transit zones, which were the only authorised ways of accessing asylum procedures from Serbia to Hungary. However, they were mostly rejected or told to wait even 7 years as 9 from 10 places per week were reserved for the families, like Remi: *“The Commissariat*

told me to go to the “game” or go back home. I can’t go back because I would be killed. So, I keep trying the “game” every week.”

Participants attributed their limited legal border channels to their recognition as “single men”; the label that assigned them lack vulnerability and dependency. Trencsényi and Naumescu (Chap. 7, this volume) argue that public and film visual narratives, besides asylum and border policies and rules, construct this generic migrant figure, upon which the men are framed as predators invading Europe. However, the men through their images showed and discussed various vulnerabilities, which were opposing their dehumanisation and criminalisation. The visual narratives conveyed past war and extreme poverty experiences and related psychological and medical problems, which were causing them struggles throughout their journeys. These were accompanied by poor living conditions in makeshift camps in Serbia, due to limited space in state-run accommodation centres prioritising families (Fig. 11.1). Hence, the photovoice and elicitation contextualised participants backgrounds of limited border crossing options as well as the everyday enclosure in inhospitable camps intercepted with their gender. As a consequence, the men were practicing the irregular and highly securitised “games”, despite their dangerous nature and violent or deadly consequences.

The men’s photo stories also showed various “game” practices and their processes on the ground, when portraying “chocolate game” and the “guarantee game”:

Chocolate game is without a smuggler. It is less expensive but difficult because you must walk by yourself in the jungle [forest]. You get very dirty, you have mud everywhere and look like a chocolate [laugh], that is why chocolate. If you go with a smuggler it is more



Fig. 11.1 Jungles and squats are places only for single men. (Photo by Kazim)

guaranteed that you will make it. Guarantee is more comfortable because you go by car from the border, but it is very expensive. Smugglers sometimes charge 3000 or 4000 euros to cross from Serbia to Croatia (Fareed).

The processes of the “guarantee game” and the “chocolaty game” were particularly explored through the images of few men, who decided to take photos beyond the camps; in border zones, mountains, forests and highways, through which they were perpetually moving onwards and forced backwards: “*Me and my friends went on the “guarantee game” last night. I took the camera with me because I wanted to show you my life here*” (Fig. 11.2) (Ahmad). Ahmad looked exhausted when he switched on a small digital camera and showed me dark and blurred photos that he had taken the previous night. The images depicted him and his friends walking through diverse forest routes and a highway, and his dirty shoes from walking through mud (Fig. 11.3). While looking at the images, Ahmad was narrating the process of his twentieth “game” from Serbia to Croatia. This time, he tried the “guarantee game”, which despite its name resulted in failure:

Me, my friends and a smuggler left around 9.30 p.m. from the camp. We were walking for seven hours to the borders where we supposed to call another smuggler and he should pick us with a car and transport us to Zagreb. But the Croatian police saw us. We did not run because the smuggler said our whole group could be in danger and he could be arrested. ... The police only slapped our faces and smashed our phones. After that, they returned us to Serbia (Ahmad).



Fig. 11.2 The “game”. (Photo by Ahmad)

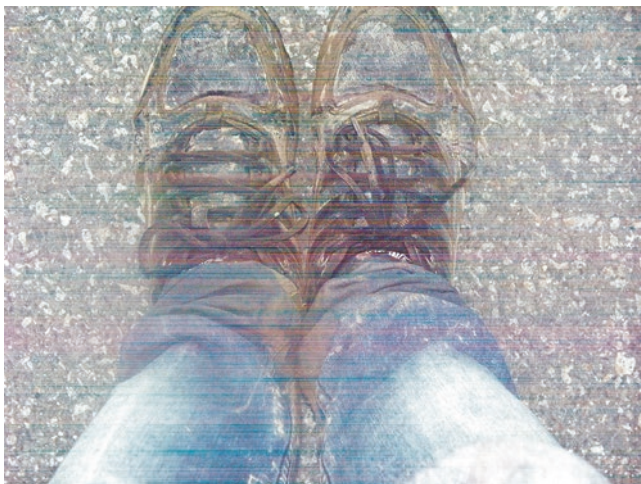


Fig. 11.3 Dirty shoes in the “game”. (Photo by Ahmad)

Although the men considered the “game” without the help of smugglers as an even smaller chance to win, most of them were practicing the “chocolatey games” as they lacked finances. The photographs of “chocolatey games” carried the narratives of walking and running in forests and mountains for days and weeks, dealing with extreme weather with lack of food and shelter, and being chased by patrols and dogs: *“We were running in the rain in the jungle [forest] for two days. I felt the police behind my back. There was no dry place to sit or lie down and no time to rest. We had no food. I knew that police dogs would find us once we got tired and had no energy to run anymore, and they did”* (Ali).

Several men also took photos of trucks and large car parks. This “chocolatey game” consisted of walking for two days through the jungles [forests] to car parks in border zones, where searching for a truck to hide under, followed by a dangerous transport to Zagreb or another European city:

We wait till the truck drivers go to sleep and after hide under truck. There is a space for spare wheel under truck in the back and if there is only one wheel I can sit there. It is a lottery if you hide under the right truck as some of them drive back to Bulgaria and you find out this when truck starts driving. If you are under the wrong truck, you must jump off. If you get the right one, you need to hold yourself under the truck for 300 km (185 miles) to Zagreb. I am trying not to be scared because otherwise I would fail (Basir).

These visual narratives demonstrate how the men’s images permitted me as a researcher to see the “game” terrains and the detailed processes of border crossings. I would otherwise struggle to see these due to legal constraints of entering border zones with them when I could be accused of human smuggling. The images of border crossings were also narrated in the men’s own language, without me intervening their stories with my assumptions of what the mobility struggles meant on the ground. Similarly, Piemontese (Chap. 10, this volume) argues that handing camera to participants’ hands results in in-depth information, beyond a researcher’s primary

expectations and understanding as a privileged observer. The photovoice therefore positioned my participants in the role of research experts of what everyday border immobility and struggle meant, shaping the research process and focus. The men were mostly discussing the detailed practices of “games” captured on the photographs with confidence, treating them as part of their daily reality despite its failures and risks. However, one of the most fundamental facets captured on the images were fears and experiences of abuses, detentions, violence, and deaths involved in the “games”.

Several men took images of various injuries. Common were foot blisters and cuts on legs and arms, or thorns in skin, which were caused while crossing dangerous landscapes. However, the most prominent injuries (bruises, open wounds, fractured/broken limbs) captured in the images were caused by the EU’s border authorities while detaining the men or pushing them back to Serbia, after their interceptions during the “games”. When looking over the images, the men were describing how Croatian or Hungarian border patrols were beating them with kicks, fists, batons or using electric shocks, razors or dog bites. The scenes on photographs depicted brutal border deterrents and traumas, however, the photographs enabled their sensitive exploration. The men could decide which photographs to show, hold control over the images’ narratives, and when to start and stop the narratives, without me interrupting or asking direct questions about violence. For instance, Fareed took the photo of his friends’ wounded back (Fig. 11.4): *“Hungarian police spotted us [in the game] and it was bad. They [police] were beating us by batons and after forced*

Fig. 11.4 “Game punishment”. (Photo by Fareed)



us to climb through the hole inside of the wire border fence that was very sharp and kept beating us while we were crawling through the fence” (Fareed). All men participating in the photo research said to have experienced several episodes of “push-backs” and violence, some even thirty times across months or a year of traveling. Other three participants took several images from detention cells, where they were detained out of the legal procedures, in Bulgaria and Greece (Fig. 11.5): *“I have been arrested three times for border crossing. I was sharing the room with drug dealers and killers, but I am not a criminal. I just want to escape from the war and study again”* (Hamid).

Violence and abuses discussed over the images were also perpetrated by people smugglers, whom the men relied on when trying to cross the hazardous terrains. Although smugglers’ practices and communication with the men were not directly photographed, the men included these into the photo-elicitations. While the men shared their images presenting only frozen moments, their meanings and stories were set in motion, including the once about experiences with smugglers. For instance, the photographs of “game” preparations in the night captured a memory of communicating with smugglers, negotiating prices and the tight border between help and exploitation: *“For some, smugglers are angels because they are the only people who help to cross the border. But for others, they are nightmare”* (Basir). Most commonly, the men said to pay in advance to be smuggled from Serbia onwards, but (a person pretending to be) a smuggler disappeared without providing transportation service. Participants also recounted to be financially exploited, and in

Fig. 11.5 “For what arrested?” (Photo by Hamid)



rare cases, sexually abused, attacked and tortured by smugglers. The images of wounds inflicted by border guards evoked an emotion that helped the men to explain further harms by smugglers. For instance, Hasseb said that he had struggled to pay unexpected additional fees above those previously agreed upon with a smuggler, leading to physical torture: *“I was kidnapped by smugglers in Bulgaria who locked me in a flat and they were beating me. They were taking photos of my injuries and filmed how they were torturing me and sent it to my family asking for more money. My family sent them 800 euros and they let me go”* (Hasseb). The men shared these traumas to complete the narratives captured on their photographs, without me asking additional direct questions. The information completing the photographic narratives was fundamental, uncovering the complexity of violent mobility struggles and diverse actors involved.

While physical pain that occurred in the “games” was visible on the photographs and injured bodies in the camps, the most profound consequence of the “games” – death, was hidden in the men’s fears and emotional worlds. Fairly innocent objects that had happened to be photographed by purpose or by mistake evoked narratives of the photographers’ cognitive worlds, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the “games” fatal consequences. For instance, Basir took the photo of a bed inside of the rub hall, where he was sleeping. The purpose of the image, as he explained, was to show his accommodation. When describing what was on the photograph, he then, pointed to a flower on the left edge that was almost invisible (Fig. 11.6) and said: *“You see this bed with flower? This bed is empty. There is just a flower now. It belonged to my friend who died last week. Him and another boy from our tent went in the game. One was sixteen and other fourteen years old. They hid under the truck and when it started driving, they realized it was going back to Bulgaria. They jumped off and one died”* (Basir).

Another three men also said during the photo-elicitations that they had friends who died during the “games”, as the result of perishing in a river, falling from a driving truck, or freezing to death while hiding in front of border patrols in a forest in the winter. The men knew little about what happened to the dead bodies of their friends. According the ARD Wien Südosteuropa (2019), at least 170 people died along the Balkan routes since July 2013, while trying to reach the EU. However, this number is expected to be higher due clandestine routes that displaced people take and perish in, where dead bodies are difficult to detect or remain unreported. In the interviews and conversations with activists, I learnt that discovered dead bodies were buried in secluded areas along the Balkan routes, for instance in Zvornik (Serbia), in graves with the sign “migrant” and the death date, unbeknown to their families and friends. Some dead bodies were repatriated with mere public acknowledgement in media that “a migrant [without a name and concrete reason] died”.

While the deaths were anonymised, unclarified, hidden and silenced, they spread rumours around camps, causing fear across all people preparing for the “games”. Most men mentioned during the photo-elicitations that they feared dying while picking a truck to hide under, crossing rocky terrains, or a river when struggling to swim, or deciding whether to go on the “game” in the winter when temperatures can reach $-20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ in Serbia. Whereas death conveys emotions, thoughts, and

Fig. 11.6 “Flower for death”. (Photo by Basir)



abstractions that are difficult to grasp, the photographs opened such discussions and facilitated its concepts. The previous study by Salvador (2017), also showed how visual (film) and participation lead to exploration of death as unrecognised, silenced and absent phenomenon in bereaved persons’ lives. Participatory visual materials, therefore, enable participants to show intersubjective portrayal and understanding of deaths in their lives, that might otherwise be more challenging verbally or in an acquired language alone.

11.5 Conclusions: Re-Thinking Photography and Participation in Violence and Migration Research

In this chapter, I justified the usage of participatory visual methodologies to shift the role of “who is behind the camera and research”. I did so to give more control to my participants over *what* to reveal about their cross-border mobilities, *how* to interpret their images as “games” and whether (or not) to disseminate them. I stressed how fundamental the participation was in the sensitive and violent border research field, where the displaced men regularly felt undermined, exploited and attacked by

diverse camera objectives pointing at them from “outside” and surveying them throughout their cross-border journeys. In the discussions of visual data collection and findings, I argued that participatory visual methods, in particular, provide an insight – a witness to people’s spaces that became securitised and hidden, but where violence and death in migration are embodied and experienced.

Participants used their images to discuss border “games”, within which their mobility was criminalised and violently punished. In this way, the men’s images opposed to stigmatised visual representation of male migrants as “not vulnerable”, “dangerous” or “criminals”, when showing their various struggles. These did not only stem from extreme direct attacks and deaths, as commonly medialised, but also in ordinary routines, social relations and language in camps. Since the “games” were securitised and socially distant and difficult to investigate due to sensitivity of the topic, I as a researcher would have struggled to see and discuss it with the men without their visual encounters. The scenes captured on the images further helped the men to recount their memories, stories and emotions, beyond photographic frozen moments. Without asking direct questions that could potentially result in emotional distortions, I learnt how the men experienced intimate moments of pain, death, and everyday fears via “games”.

While discussing co-working in (visual) research, including profit, I also wish to point out how the participants used their photographs for their own purposes. The visual process served for both the men and me as an “investigatory tool” and a revelation of what they believed was the truth but had been omitted within visual conceptualisation of borders. The male “game players” visualised violent mobility obstacles on their smartphones to resist rendering such violence as a seamless and accepted fact occurring daily on European borders. Participants said that the main reason they kept visual memos of their journeys on their smartphones (particularly injuries and dire living conditions in camps) was to share the images with humanitarian organisations, activists and the public. Others hoped to use such photographs as support material when applying for asylum in their final destinations. Thus, through the visual display medium, these men wished to gain greater protection throughout their migratory journeys.

Although the photographs did not directly change the men’s limited legal transit options, “push-backs”, and violence, self-directed photography gave them the right to express their opinions and contribute to the systems trying to implement policy changes. NGOs, activists, independent lawyers told, during conversations, of using images of various human rights abuses taken by displaced people as evidence material for advocacy purposes. As Butler (2009) argues, photographs are needed as evidence of violence and crimes, but their narratives mobilise people. In this way, vision is political, and visual methodologies have a power that non-visual qualitative methods often lack (Warren, 2005), particularly when control over camera and narratives is in hands of those being subjected to violence. However, photography as a tool for self-protection and advocacy became a threat to perpetrators and border patrols commonly destroy the mobile phones of displaced people to obstruct their potential to document human rights violations and hinder their further movement (Augustová & Sapoch, 2020).

Besides the damage of visual material and safety of participants, other limitation stems from collaboration after our withdrawal from the field. While photographing and filming, as well as interpreting visuals, is based on co-working, the final process of writing and publishing involves no further active interplay between all those involved in the research. I found it difficult to keep in contact and further discuss the written work with my participants after my withdrawal from the field, due to the men’s regular movements, damage to phones, sim-cards changes and many other unplanned events on their unsteady and traumatic journeys. The loss of contact was also caused by the participants’ “right to disappear”, as discussed by Prieto (Chap. 18, in this volume), particularly after the men themselves also left violent borders and camps and started negotiating their new peaceful life in safety. The researcher’s writing up process, when re-interpreting the men’s photographic stories in an “academic narrative”, derived from participants’ meanings and interpretations of photographic material. However, the main arguments on the uses of participatory visual methodologies or how to structure participants’ photographs into an academic story about border violence is no longer co-production, but the researcher’s final decisions based on her assumptions, interests and objectives.

A further limitation involved in using (participatory) visual methods, as encountered in the eight months of research in Bosnia, was the inability to overcome the camera-as-an object-of-exploitation and aggression image. With an even greater influx of journalists, NGOs, activists, and tourists daily stepping into Bosnian camps with cameras, the visualisation of migration was perceived by the displaced population as generating a zoo effect. People regularly reacted to large camera lenses angrily, saying “This is not a zoo!”, which was also written on the camp showers with their painted symbol of a crossed-out camera. Out of respect for participants, the following study in Bosnian camps avoided using (participatory) photography except from photo documentation of injuries for advocacy purposes when requested by/consented by victims for their own potential increase of protection. While participatory research methods are useful investigatory tools and increase control for all people involved in research, their use needs to be always re-negotiated with participants and reconsidered in relation to quickly evolving border contexts, in which displaced people play the “games” (of violence and death).

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Chapter 12

Crafting an Event, an Event on Craft. Working Together to Represent Migration Experiences



Lucie Bacon, Amandine Desille, and Noémie Paté

12.1 Introduction

We are concerned. We are three early-career researchers in the field of international migration and we are concerned. This concern arises from our respective fieldwork. On the one hand, we witness a politics which toughens eligibility to asylum and makes the access to reside in a foreign country precarious. On the other hand, we are witnesses of an ever more polarised discourse induced by an emergency-like and securitised management of migration flows. European policies aiming at controlling migration routes favour exclusion (erections of walls, multiplication of hotspots' logics) and death (in the last 25 years, IOM estimates account for 40,000 humans who died or disappeared on migration routes, with 6000 in 2016 only). These migration policies are the result of a selective amnesia: only certain striking figures, facts and images participate in their production. Secondly, our concern grows while we witness a lack of circulation between scientific knowledge and measures adopted at a political level: our researches' results are too often confined to the scientific sphere. And if there are bridges between scientific production and migration policies, in our opinion, they are hardly taken. Thirdly, this concern is confirmed through the few professional perspectives offered to early-career scholars today. Competing for the rare positions that exist, facing a growing precarity, to invest ourselves in the field of international migration leads to questioning our responsibility: to which project shall we dedicate our time? How do we better disseminate our research

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findings and do so to a larger audience? How do we work with others to better distribute the few existing resources? In general, the three concerns we have evoked engage our deontological and personal liability.

In such a context, how do we participate in the construction and restitution of knowledge, how do we engage (Sartre, 1948) in this necessary reflexive and collective reflection? In his essay, *The Responsibility of Intellectuals*, Noam Chomsky (1967) affirms: “It is a moral imperative to find out and tell the truth as best one can, about things that matter, to the right audience.” The audience which Chomsky refers to seems to be an essential element of the implementation of a response to our three concerns. Scientific gatherings are often elitist, reserved to a circle of initiates. Nevertheless, we believe that this format ought to be challenged in order to make our research results available, but also to engage in a reflexive and collective manner in the public sphere. It seems that there is an injunction to open the debate to others who share similar concerns.

It is obvious that scientific gatherings hold an important function to structure knowledge. These events are often milestones in the construction of a particular field of study, such as the ones which enabled the definition of the discipline of visual anthropology through the creation of “communities of practice” (Pink, 2006, p.4). Yet there are - to our knowledge - few studies on their constitution, implementation or on the impact of such events. Among the ones we came across, Feldman (2012) carried out a “non-local” ethnography of Metropolis conference and of its importance in defining migration policies. At a much more local level, Golden (1998, 2002) carried out an ethnography of conferences and workshops organised in Israel after a large number of Former Soviet Union immigrants settled in the country. These gatherings are places of tension between “integration” policies pushed forward by the Israeli State, and the aspirations of immigrants who participate. Art events were also subjected to analysis (Becker, 1974; Zebracki & Palmer, 2017). For instance, the collection of essays edited by Zebracki and Palmer (2017) interrogate the impact of art performances on larger political questions such as citizens’ participation, surveillance or ecology.

How can we explain the lack of scientific interest in these events, although they are regulated by rigid norms? Who participates, who makes her voice heard, on which issue, how the lecturer presents, how the audience reacts ... all these elements form an “exchange culture” (Badouard, Mabi, & Monnoyer-Smith, 2016) or a “public culture” (Cefai, 2007) which grants a quasi-sacred character to the scientific event. The objective of this chapter is not to call scientific gatherings into question. However, we wish to question the public and political dimension of these gatherings: how can we organise an event of which the objective is to provide an alternative to the hostile and inhospitable environment to a “larger political community” (Cefai, 2013)?

The first meeting we organised around such issues, which will be the topic of this chapter, was meant to enlarge the audience. With this in mind we thought of three primary objectives, namely: mobilising artistic projects; unveiling the craft involved in their production; and gathering people from diverse social worlds, including the university, the arts and activism. These three objectives answer one central

hypothesis. For us, *artistic practices enable an embodied experience which engages our senses and our interpretation, hence catching our attention in a stronger manner; whilst opening up the borders between science and art enables more collaborations and produces new modalities of representation.* During the organisational stage, we already had in mind to analyse the meeting and to disseminate the results in a form or another. During the event itself, we collected different data to support the analysis: we took notes and met every morning of the event to confront them and discuss them; we shot pictures and videos of every activity; and we recorded sound bites. At the moment, these data are not yet accessible, but the aim is that it would be stored under the common licence Attribution-Non Commercial-Non Derivative.

The following text aims at analysing *a posteriori* the organisation of a public gathering on international migration, which brought together scientific, artistic and militant practices. In the first part, we will describe the craft of this event. In the second and third part, we will answer more directly to the theme of this book section - collaboration. Indeed, we will ask to which extent hybrid practices, that is the de-compartmentalising of social sciences, art and activism, enable the deconstruction of sensational and de-humanised representations of migrations. Finally, we will question the limits for these collaborations, when power hierarchies may reactivate.

12.2 Genesis, Craft of the Event and Dissemination

This first part has the ambition to render, *a posteriori*, the steps and stakes of the craft of the event “Migrations: nos voix, nos chemins de traverse. Rencontre entre arts, sciences et militances”, which took place in Marseille from 24 to 26 October 2018. For this to happen, we have established a partnership with Dr. Mickaëla Lemeur, representative of the NGO le Tamis Anthropologies Créatives. The event took place in four Marseille associative places, which graciously let us use their venues. Three French research institutes partially funded the event: Migrinter (Université de Poitiers), Telemme (Université de Aix-Marseille) and Institut des Sciences Sociales du Politique.

12.2.1 Genesis and Craft of the Event

In the introduction, we have explained that the event’s organisation stemmed from a collective reflection.

We have agreed on three fundamental objectives which we constantly reminded ourselves of during the organisation and realisation of the project. We wanted to gather in one event diverse *artistic projects* addressing migration, including films, plays, photo exhibitions, literary pieces or sound shows. However, the event was not

only about showing their results, but rather about *debating their craft*, that is, the contexts of their production, the circulation of the pieces and their impacts. Along these different moments of production, we wanted to encourage scholars, artists or activists to share the methodological, ethical and deontological questions and dilemmas they had faced. Lastly, this event intended to bring together actors outside of the academia. We wanted to *invite participants from different social worlds* (while thinking of these social worlds as porous i.e. an artist could be an activist) to be involved, favouring notably multi-voice communications, enabling a bigger diversity. We invited people who have either created or are associated with artistic and research projects; social workers, activists and citizens who want to bring to light their actions and mobilisations, but also the people they engage with daily; artists, including comedians, writers, poets, painters, illustrators, filmmakers and musicians, who want to *reflect on an experience or a project done by, with, for persons who have experienced migration*; and social scientists from a wide range of disciplines whose work focuses on migration-related issues, and who question the possible relations between artistic production and migration studies.

12.2.2 Concrete Construction of the Event

At the outset, we met with Marseille actors whose work related to international migration. We presented our project to popular education organisations, cultural organisations, applied research, counselling and advocacy organisations and art exhibition venues. This step enabled us to get criticism and to recentre our objectives, as well as to identify spaces which could host the projects we would eventually select, and discuss funding. This exploration was necessary to project ourselves in the different venues and imagine more clearly what the event would be like.

After that, we built a partnership with Dr. Mikaela Lemeur, anthropologist and member of le Tamis. Le Tamis is an applied research organisation, where scientific and artistic activities across the social sciences and humanities, arts, and popular education-based techniques are organised for a large public. Its general objectives are (1) to spread knowledge in social sciences and humanities between specialists and the public, and (2) to bring scientific methods and analytical tools to daily use.

The choice of the city of Marseille as the *scene* of our event is not trivial. We turned to municipal and regional institutions as we thought they will support such an initiative to enhance the city's cultural actors and places. Secondly, we wanted to contact donors who support civil initiatives and wish to highlight experiences related to citizenship and participation. With the support of Mikaela Lemeur, we therefore wrote several proposals for fundraising, so as to support the transport, accommodation and logistical needs of the participants. We approached the regional council Région PACA and the municipality of Marseille - even though we were warned by colleagues that projects including migration-related issues were not granted funding. We also submitted applications to support mechanisms for citizen initiatives, such as Fondation Audiens Générations, PIEED or projets étudiants

d'Éducation à la Citoyenneté et à la Solidarité Internationale. Finally, we approached our three research units as to obtain institutional support, Migrinter, Institut des Sciences Sociales du Politique and Telemme).

It seems important to highlight that, following these applications, institutional actors that were solicited – at city, region and state levels – rejected the proposal. The city was the only one which provided informal feedback: we were told that it would have been necessary to obtain the back-up of a local politician to ensure that our proposal would be considered. In general, rumour had it that the issue addressed - international migration - led to suspicion. Our research units partially addressed our demands, probably because of the hybrid character of the event.¹ We only managed to raise a small amount of money, which enabled to partially reimburse six of the 49 participants at the event, as well as to provide a hot meal for all every night of the three-day event. The free and voluntary time invested in fundraising is not proportionate with the little amount we have raised. These experiences were often shared by partners and participants to the event (similarly working on migration-related issues) who face a financial and institutional vacuum, compromising the implementation of their activities. This precarity is translated by overwork, fatigue and frustration. In contrast, this absence also generates solidarity and cooperation between activists, artists and scholars.

12.2.3 Dissemination of the Call and Reception

As we aimed to break free from the standards weighting on university events, we aspired to bring together a community of ideas and praxis that could help us go beyond our usual limits. When it came to selecting the projects, we didn't want to build a programme based on our ideas and directly invite identified authors of artistic projects on migrations but rather write a call for proposals and disseminate it to avoid being among ourselves once again.

Old habits die hard: we scholarly wrote a three-axe call for proposals. The first axis, entitled “the creative dimension of migration studies: a way, for scholars to break free of the lab?” questioned more particularly the artistic practices of migration studies' scholars. Art can be a method to produce data, artistic production in itself can be an object to analyse, art work can support intellectual thinking, or art can enable to reconstitute findings. The second axis was entitled “the transformative function of arts”. Here, we suggested that those who rely on artistic practices and productions to express themselves on “migration” can weigh on social action and transform representations. We wonder: are those productions more effective than scientific productions to understand and raise awareness? The third axis, “how to do with” asked the question of the “collective intellectual” brought forward by Pierre

¹Funding available for scientific events expects a research unit at a university to take the lead; while funding available for “popular education” events are relatively less familiar with academic format of calls for proposals and so on.

Bourdieu (2001) and encouraged participants to think of the effectiveness of cooperation to strengthen the critical position against mainstream discourses, but also to think of their constraints and limits. The call for proposals was long. We decided to write a second one, targeting a non-scientific public, so as not to “scare” (Fig. 12.1).

Following the dissemination of both these calls, we received 70 proposals. The authors identified themselves as follow: PhD students and scholars in social sciences (demography, geography, psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology and law) and the humanities (cinema, literature, media, plastic arts, architecture and history), filmmakers, artistic directors, musicians, dancers, singers, plastic artists, videomakers, photographers, poets, stage directors, comedians, biographers, illustrators, urban planners, writers, journalists, social workers, activists, exiles, activists, therapists and family counsellors. We think that the partnership with le Tamis and with associative spaces associated with artistic and activist actors in the region enabled the attraction of this diversity of proposers.

Among the proposals, we selected 18 projects. Often, they are on-going, unfinished works. They bring together 49 participants. A third of these participants was affiliated with research institutions, a third with militant institutions, and a third bring forward their artistic practice.

Table 12.1 shows the participants’ profile:

Seven participants spoke openly about their migration experiences, among them three scholars, three artists and one activist. Ten persons whose projects were selected did not come: here, structural constraints which we briefly mentioned when addressing funding issues prevented them from participating. It means that many benefited from a limited mobility, either for financial or legal reasons. The latter is even stronger when organising an event on migration. The vulnerability of persons who have experienced migration is characterised by constrained mobility, and strong institutional violence. The question of “absence” emerges here, and we will come back to it in another section of this text.

As mentioned in the introduction, these projects need to be presented and discussed with an audience. For this audience to attend, we created disseminating platforms: a WordPress blog where key documents are hosted (this is often mobilised in our field); and a Facebook event, associated with the Facebook pages of our partners. We also spread the word through email. In addition, the day before the event took place, we recorded a radio programme of an hour with a local Marseille radio called Radio Galère (Fig. 12.2).

MARSEILLE
DU 23 AU 28 OCTOBRE 2018

**MIGRATIONS : NOS VOIX, NOS CHEMINS DE TRAVERSE
RENCONTRE ENTRE ARTS, SCIENCES ET MILITANCES**

Appel à participation
[Version courte]

Du 22 au 28 octobre 2018 se tiendra, à Marseille, une rencontre autour de tables-rondes, expositions, projections, spectacles. Ce croisement des pratiques, créations et réflexions cherchera à explorer comment imaginer de nouvelles manières de rendre visible les migrations, d'entendre la voix migrante. Face à l'urgence et à la complexité des situations, face à un modèle sociétal qui oscille entre images spectaculaires et mesures restrictives, nous souhaitons en effet nous poser ensemble la question de notre responsabilité : comment sortir du « grand spectacle » politique et médiatique pour penser nos productions de façon à « dire la vérité du mieux possible » (N. Chomsky) ?

Si vous êtes artiste – musicien.nne, poète, écrivain.e, photographe, metteur.euse en scène, comédien.ne, peintre, sculpteur.trice... – et que vous souhaitez revenir sur une expérience ou un projet mené pour, avec et/ou par des personnes migrantes.

Si vous êtes intervenant.e social.e – bénévole, éducateur.trice, travailleur.euse social.e... – et que vous cherchez à mettre en lumière à la fois votre action et vos mobilisations, mais aussi celles des personnes aux côtés de qui vous vous engagez quotidiennement.

Si vous êtes doctorant.e.s ou chercheur.e.s – issus de toute discipline – et que vos travaux portent sur les thématiques migratoires et interrogent les liens possibles avec l'art.

Si au cours de votre vie, vous avez fait l'expérience de la migration et que vous êtes soit à l'origine soit associé à un projet artistique.

Vous avez jusqu'au **30 mai 2018** pour nous proposer vos participations !

POURQUOI PARTICIPER ?

La rencontre est pensée au carrefour de l'université, du monde associatif et du monde des arts, pour faire glisser les productions scientifiques vers les 'laboratoires artistiques' marseillais, et pour exposer les productions artistiques dans les lieux d'échanges et de débat : Créons des ponts !

C'est donc dans l'articulation de deux actions que nous nous retrouverons :

Des tables rondes, qui rassembleront des personnes de tous horizons – universitaires, artistes, migrant.e.s, intervenant.e.s sociaux.ales – pour débattre des thèmes liés aux migrations internationales et à notre responsabilité citoyenne.

Des soirées artistiques qui mettront à l'honneur des productions sur les migrations internationales en amenant les personnes présentes à s'interroger, à réfléchir et à agir.

L'idée est de faire de ces quelques jours un espace de rencontres, d'échanges et de débats, mais aussi un tremplin vers de nouvelles coopérations, de nouveaux projets, de nouvelles manières de faire avec.

Fig. 12.1 Short version of the call for proposals

Table 12.1 Participants at the event “Migrations: nos voix, nos chemins de traverse. Rencontre entre arts, sciences et militances”, which took place in Marseille from 24 to 26 October 2018

Total:	49 participants
Present vs absent:	39 present vs. 10 absent ^a
Gender balance:	29 women, 20 men
Geographical location of participants:	France, Belgium, Switzerland, Tunisia
Academic vs. non-academic participants:	33 ^b vs. 16.
Institutional affiliations:	19 in research centres and universities (7 early career researchers and 12 postdocs and permanent researchers), 15 NGO and social enterprises workers, and 15 artists ^c .

^aAbsent participants either gave us the instructions to run their project (it was the case for two documentaries) or were part of a larger group, ensuring that some at least would be presenting. Thus, some projects were only presented by one or two members of the group

^b33 participants sent us their academic profile, even though only 19 are actually affiliated with a research centre

^cSome were affiliated with an organisation and therefore benefited a certain material support, while other were freelancers and had to find external sources of support



Fig. 12.2 Recording at the radio station

12.3 Crossing Practices to Reinvent Migrations' Representations

12.3.1 A Hybrid Programme

Space and time were considered initial conditions in the organisation of a programme which would enable bridges between arts, science and activism.

First of all, looking for venues was crucial. Four venues accepted to host our activities: Casa Consolat - an associative canteen which carries out participative and cultural projects -, Dar Lamifa - a cultural venue which adopts popular education practices -, Equitable Café - an associative, cultural and militant café which seeks² to promote positive and solidary alternatives -, and Librairie Maupetit - the oldest bookstore in Marseille, which also organises lectures, workshops and exhibitions.

Space was then a dimension of the attempt to “de-compartmentalised”. When we developed these partnerships, we attempted to introduce scientific productions towards these Marseille artistic labs, and to exhibit artistic productions in venues meant for exchange and debate. The said four venues have in common the fact that they promote social cohesion, social dialogue, and new initiatives and alternatives. They were easily convinced by the relevance of our project and quickly became key partners in the promotion and organisation of the event (Fig. 12.3).

Second of all we thought of time as another dimension of de-compartmentalisation. We often feel frustrated in academia not to have enough time to exchange, debate or discover. Informal moments were valued, notably those of lunch, coffee break or dinner. This informality enabled elective affinities, some of which have led to lasting collaborations. A fortiori, our objective was to permit local actors to join us, such as local associations' members but also professionals, so that the audience will be diverse. We favoured afternoons and evenings during the all saints' day holiday.

At the junction of hybrid times and spaces, we experienced:

- Four exhibitions installed in Casa Consolat's garage and at Equitable Café (“Correspondances mouvantes: Royacamp”, Morgane Dujmovic and Mathilde Schimke; “Ceux qui passent, ceux qui restent. Le campement de migrants de Norrent-Fontes”, Mathilde Pette and Julien Saison; “Nos super-héros”, Justine Roquelaure and Laura Tortosa-Ibanez; “Recours”, Jaballah et associée)
- Three round tables at Equitable Café and Librairie Maupetit (Les voix de la scène/ La voie des connections radiophoniques/Les arts graphiques en traverse)
- A literary café at Equitable Café (book presentation *L'asile en exil*, Observatoire Asile Marseille)
- A documentary screening at Equitable café (“Blue Sky From Pain”, Stephanos Mangriotis and Laurence Pillant; “Traversées de la mémoire”, Erika Thomas; “Exodos”, Fabien Guillermont)
- A concert at Dar Lamifa (“Ailleurs” Nouvelle musicale, Cécile Braud)
- A performance at Equitable Café (“Le chef est chef même en caleçon”, Dominique Bela).

²Unfortunately, Café Equitable closed some months after our event because of financial issues.



Fig. 12.3 Map of the four venues, Marseille

12.3.2 *Migrations' Representations: Co-creation, Stakes and Intentions*

Among the presented projects, some were the result of a cooperation between artists and scientists, while others were carried out by people who identified as both artist and scholar, and some more by artists who draw on the results of research projects. Each type of cooperation or co-creation revealed different collaboration intentions and stakes.

The reader has probably not participated in the event. In order to make our descriptions more concrete, we develop below two vignettes. The two productions presented hereafter were selected by the authors because they are both the results of a reciprocal collaboration between an artist and a scholar. Their analysis enables us to think through co-creation.

12.3.2.1 **Nos Super Héros (2018)**

Laura Tortosa Ibañez is a plastic artist and scholar involved with social and political art. In her productions and in her research work, she challenges the social function of art. She works together with Justine Roquelaure, freelance photographer and

autodidact. Through her photographs, she explores the resilience of persons who experienced ruptures in their lives. That led her to work on representations of exile and migration.

Laura Tortosa Ibañez and Justine Roquelaure presented a photographic and documentary project which plays with representations and reveals the super-powers of children who experienced exile. *Nos Super Héros*, which we can translate as our Super-Heroes, is based on a sensorial working methodology, focused on displaced families in the Pyrénées Orientales region in France.

Challenging migrants' representation as well as children's rights to their image, they thought to explore the "traces" left on families who experienced migration. The project enables children to be children: to play, have fun, invent and be conscious of their talents and their dreams. During collective workshops they developed the super-hero metaphor with displaced children: what super-power would they want, and what would they look like were they super-heroes themselves? Through drawing, scenography, sound and photography, the dreams and strengths of these children – who transform into their own super-heroes – are the subjects of the exhibition. The authors position themselves outside of the spectacle, protecting the children's anonymity, while favouring suggestive strategies without forcing testimony.

This vignette is particularly interesting for several reasons. On the one hand, it presents the hybrid nature of the duo – an academic and a freelance photographer - which decompartmentalizes their practices. On the other hand, the intention of the project is to allow children, who are generally denied their agency capacity, to reclaim their identity as they want. This project is also built on collaboration with other professionals and with families, hence bringing to light a global and comprehensive vision of the situation of these children. Finally, the authors play with the anonymization of vulnerable persons: we never recognize the child when we see her in huge formats, which allows a result that is both ethical and effective (Fig. 12.4).

12.3.2.2 Blue Sky from Pain (2016)

Laurence Pillant is a geographer. In her work, she questions migratory control in Greece and its imagery. She worked together with Stephanos Mangriotis, a photographer. He has authored several photographic documentaries on migration and on persons who suffer from mental disorder.

This film is based on Pillant's research. It shows one piece of the migratory control's construction puzzle, that of confinement. The audience sees images of abandoned detention centres used in the 2000s at the Greek-Turkish border to incarcerate undocumented migrants. A voice over speaks of deprivation of liberty, based on interviews led by the researcher.

Projecting this film enabled a reflection on the stakes of data collection, representation and restitution of absence: the absence of an immigrant who was here but is not anymore. It is also the result of a negotiation between the scientist and the



Fig. 12.4 Extract of *Nos super-héros*, Justine Roquelaure and Laura Tortosa-Ibañez (2018)

artist: how to share one's fieldwork with a photographer? How to choose an image? Is it crucial that data be visible, audible or is suggestion enough?

Again, this project is supported by a team that presents different practices. But what characterizes this work is that the two authors were outspoken when it came to presenting the tensions and negotiations. Secondly, this project poses a crucial question: how to show without showing? And the result is a video medium that circulates and is disseminated more easily, which presents less material constraints compared to an exhibition (Fig. 12.5).

12.3.3 When Co-creations Become “Living Archives”

During this event, we made an almost constant observation: the public was not passive, they participated, they reacted (sometimes even emotionally), the participants invested the spaces for debate and left written traces (for example via letters to the migrants represented). Faced with this observation and based on the event's ethnography, we argue that the productions resulting from a collaboration between art and science succeed in deconstructing preconceived ideas (which will be developed at the end of this section) and in effectively showing and documenting. As such, they aim at re-establishing a social equality for immigrants who, otherwise, are maintained in a dominated position.

We remind the reader that we started from the following assumptions: a migration “spectacle” made of spectacular and sensationalist images; and trend towards collective amnesia (Noiriel, 1988) when facing migration phenomena. We aimed at



Fig. 12.5 Poster *Blue Sky from Pain*, Stephanos Mangriotis and Laurence Pillant (2016)

inventing new ways to represent migrants and their trajectories, while attempting to escape the violence of the biographic injunction one undergoes through administrative procedures for the migrants’ “treatment” (residency, asylum, children rights). Indeed, these procedures challenge the migrants’ stories while demanding they tell “coherent” and complete stories. Following Paul Ricoeur’s work (1983), a story does not need to be coherent to be seen as “acceptable”: it can be fragmented, even split. Supporting the validity of narrative fragments, moving or still images are therefore true iconographic breakaways: a way of telling one’s story by circumventing the violence of the narrative injunction. Hence and similarly to Karolina Nikielska-Sekula’s photographs (see Chap. 2, in this volume) the documentary film *Blue Sky From Pain* flips the storytelling: presence is not represented, but absence. Shots are

long images, quasi still, which show beds without bodies, shoes without feet, walls without doors.

These images and sounds become traces of the successive operations that shape migration trajectories, and this in a common effort to position them between institutions and individuals, and against the great spectacle of migration and collective amnesia. As Béliard and Eideliman (2008) have suggested, they become “living archives” which do not only reveal precious scenes and materials, but also represent objects to be analysed. These productions, which showed the subjectivity of migration experiences and do not rely on spectacular images, are therefore more effective in informing (this is evidenced by the many messages left by the visitors), and deconstructing accepted ideas than a scientific paper or communication would be. These “traces” are important and efficient because they are shifting, interactive and lasting.

If we were to look at other productions shown during the event in Marseille, the drawings realised by Observatoire Asile Marseille become traces of aid hyper-conditionality and the violation of migrants’ fundamental rights in Marseille; Athia Nu Dem’s musical productions created between Dakar, Ouaga and Marseille display xenophobic institutional discourses and practices; the documentary film *Traversées de la mémoire* by Erika Thomas enables to sustainably archive the historical dimension of long lasting migrations, otherwise collectively perceived as temporary and extraordinary.

Three trends were identified for these productions to become living archives, and hence act efficiently in the deconstruction of preconceived ideas:

- Associate migration with desire, knowledge, dreams and emancipation, instead of misery, poverty, ignorance and war. Reversing representations aims at transforming the collective sight upon migrants. This is particularly the case of the project *Nos super-héros*. The children are indeed encouraged to conceive and become the “Super-hero” they want to be: what costume, what posture and, of course, what super powers. Encouraging the participation of migrants in scientific-artistic projects would therefore induce the recognition of the agency of migrants, which therefore contributes to the deconstruction of dominant discourses.
- Support practices that acknowledge that migrants are actors, and not intrinsically passive individuals. Parental or spousal consent, explicitly required by ethical committees, or implicitly understood as a rule of conduct by researchers, acts as a symbolic reminder of a perceived passivity of migrants. Encouraging projects which enable migrants to own space could enable to avoid asymmetry, social unbalance, so to reach some form of social equality (even though it would be presumptuous to assume it is entirely possible). As reminded in the introduction to this volume, these projects can “allow individuals to build an active relationship to citizenship, to confer agency upon them, and to allow them to overcome their post-political condition” (Salzbrunn, Dellwo, & Besençon 2018). This active participation is a form of “citizenship from below” (Pereira, Maiztegui-Oñate, & Mata-Codesal, 2016).

- Resort to suggestion and interpellation in (still or moving) visual artwork. Suggestion and interpellation are presented as an alternative to provoking, sensational, which enable the audience to be reflexive and critical.

12.4 Disciplines and Practices' Interculturality: How to Work With?

12.4.1 *Becoming a Reflexive Community*

While organising this event, we thought of the crossroads between practices, methods, approaches and languages. The risk was to model, to conclude with ready-made proposals, or even to be satisfied with the illustrative function of art. Understanding this risk, our objective was to form a “collective intellectual” as imaged by Pierre Bourdieu (2001): a community of individuals from different disciplines, but who agree upon the same expectations of rationality, reflexivity, vigilance and knowledge. We have meant to develop our reflection following these expectations. On the one hand, crossing practices enable to increase *vigilance*. As Laurence Pillant and Stephanos Mangriotis experienced while filming their documentary film, the scientist can guarantee a methodological and ethical rigour (notably when it comes to the rapport with the participants to the enquiry) whereas the artist will be cautious to maintain a more general aim, through the sensorial and emotional dimension of the artistic support. On the other hand, all participants at the event have mentioned at one point or the other the same concerns we have described in the introduction. We share a certain common *knowledge* related to migration reality, the emergencies of this reality, and our practices face similar stakes while opposed to media and political discourses. We are therefore developing a common *rational*: it is to serve the same objective – that of finding an alternative to the inward-looking attitudes of a population against the other – that we mobilise certain tools and think about our practices. Finally, co-creations and the dialogues they triggered developed our *reflexivity*. Even more they have highlighted how crucial it is to produce works that provoke the reflexivity of the audience. Escaping collective amnesia, circulating knowledge between different spheres and engage as to deconstruct preconceived ideas are at stake.

When we aim to following these expectations, cooperation can enable the strengthening of our critical positions against dominant discourse, and lead to what Bourdieu (2001) has called the “collective production of realist utopias”, in other words, applied knowledge and reasoning at the service of a more coherent society.

12.4.2 *Collaboration Under Constraint*

Forming a reflexive community is, however, an enterprise under constraint. Firstly, at a structural level, participants share the difficulties they meet before and during the event. All mention the emergency that characterises their production, scarce budgets, exhausted and irritated staff. As we have sketched before, actors work in an institutional void. Political authorities are absent from the event. But for an artwork to be finalised, it needs to be disseminated, and it needs support. Against this void, artists evoke alternative strategies based on solidarity. Nevertheless, we can question the reproduction of exploitative relations these constraints lead to. For instance, photographs of one exhibition were shipped by a cheap shareable truck. This shipping alternative means that one rides in a truck that would drive to Marseille anyway. While we discuss the shipment with the artist, he tells that he eventually met with the driver at the reception and realised that he was an immigrant, that this extra low-cost shipment meant that he waited overtime at the customs, and that his working conditions are far from the ones provided by law.

A second series of constraints is related to co-creation. In fact, cooperation leads to numerous questions and to a feeling of uneasiness. Co-creation is difficult, as we have experienced ourselves in the scientific committee. Our scientific committee included solely scholars who selected, organised and moderated the discussions. What about an artistic-scientific-activist committee? We wished to include other actors. Instead of a mixed committee, what we did was to ask colleagues from various disciplines and professions to read and read again the documents we produced (project, subsidies' applications and calls). As for a less "scientific" scientific committee, we have invited the participants at the end of the event, and several artists have already shown interest.

Aside from the scientific committee composition, at the scale of the event, co-creation is also often discussed. During the film screening which took place on the first evening, we screened three films: one which aim is to offer a historical perspective over Portuguese migration and anti-colonial activists among them (Thomas 2017); a documentary focusing on the work of the NGO SOS méditerranée entitled *Exodos* (Guillermont 2017); and the "impressionist" (following Barbash (1997)'s typology) *Blue Sky from Pain* (Mangriotis & Pillant 2016) which we have described at length in an earlier section. *Exodos* is immediately controversial: some people in the audience find it moving, hence its objective is reached; others advocate for the end of these spectacular images, arguing that the media provide enough of those. Presenting three different "intentions" during the same night is seen as problematic. Nevertheless, we argue that even though *Exodos* adopts more from a journalistic sensational genre, it was necessary to propose it so as to trigger a debate (Fig. 12.6). This debate was enabled because of the informality of the encounter. As for *Blue Sky from Pain*, the debate that followed its screening focused on the difficult cooperation between the geographer and the photographer. Laurence Pillant describes the negotiations that took place: these negotiations relate to what is debated in the introduction of the volume, that is the relations between art and visuals in research.



Fig. 12.6 A debate in Café Equitable

For the geographer, the film is the outcome of a research work, that ought to be contextualised. For the photographer however, the punctum is more important than the studium (Baudrillard, 1999). The authors will compromise and allow some context through the hiring of an actor that reads a text in Arabic, creating the voice over. The images are not shown alone anymore, but accompanied by a text.

Finally, even though we assumed that meeting points are crucial to avoid pitfalls, the process of co-creation and hybrid practices can quickly lead to reproducing dominant categories - in the images produced but also in the hierarchies between partners. For instance, at the second day of the event, we organised a roundtable. At this occasion, we witnessed the speed at which we can go back to formal presentations which are authoritative. The roundtable took place at a bookstore located in the centre of Marseille. The last floor is an exhibition space, equipped with chairs, comfortable seats for lecturers and a projector. On this afternoon, a large part of the participants were in fact scholars. The chairs neatly organised in rows, the bigger seats in the front, the mics and projector, played out to recreate a more formal format. All of a sudden, censorship happens, even more from non-academic participants.³ The debate is more difficult. If we oppose this setting with the one of the exhibition *Mes super héros* which we mentioned before, it takes place in the Garage Imaginaire facing the Casa Consolat. And it is indeed a garage! True, it required some cleaning before hanging the photographs, and both authors had to use their craft to organise the space. But at the opening debate, the garage, open towards the street, cemented, with an eclectic selection of chairs and benches, an Italian

³Non-academic participants already tend to self-censor out of fear that they do not control the codes, languages and topics of the so-called intellectuals.

coffee maker surrounded by non-matching cups and glasses ... enabled an open debate, curious, followed by many questions to the artists.

There are multiple stakes at play: What do we talk about? With whom? Where? At what time? All these elements can constrain the formation of a community.

12.5 To Conclude. A Deficient Cooperation: Absence of Persons Who Have Experienced Migration

Projects are often carried out only partially with persons who have experienced migration, even though they are the ones they refer to primarily. Dominique Bela, author and comedian of the play *Le chef est chef même en caleçon* performed the last day of our event. He argues: “Who better than a migrant to talk about migration, “to tell the truth as best as possible”. I am a migrant. This identity sticks to my skin, determines how I get in the offices, in the shops, when I ask for information in the street. [...] My hackneyed speech celebrates freedom and how the theatre saved me. Of course I have a lot of hardship, however I develop resistance. I am a “standing man”.” (Bela 2018).

Projects often start with immigrants ... to be presented without them. One exhibition selected for the event is an artistic duet, one of them being inadmissible to France (Jaballah et associée 2018). Another is the result of workshops carried out with immigrants who are not in the region anymore (Dujmovic & Schimke since 2017). We have come to realise that some projects were developed without any encounter with persons who have experienced migration, such as the musical novel *Ailleurs* by Cécile Braud (2017). With the institutional absence we have mentioned, comes the immigrants’ absence. Participants to the event – scholars, artists, activists – are present because they benefit from the privilege of mobility. They assume the responsibility to represent the ones who do not benefit from this privilege. Actors representing the various projects become “brokers” of the migrant voice, the art medium being the material support. Made visible through artistic projects, migrants are nevertheless absent. Artistic projects attempt at filling the void or at least at enabling reflection and raising awareness.

Yet until the privilege of mobility does not become a right, our ambition to become a strong collective intellectual will be weakened by the absence of those which are firstly interested (Chomsky, 1967). This paradox – visibility without presence – is at the heart of what seems necessary to do now, to ensure the sustainability of this first event, and the reflection which followed.

Art works Quoted in This Chapter

“Correspondances mouvantes: Royacamp”, Morgane Dujmovic & Mathilde Schimke, evolutive project, since 2017

“Ceux qui passent, ceux qui restent. Le campement de migrants de Norrent-Fontes”, Mathilde Pette & Julien Saison, 2016

“Nos super-héros”, Justine Roquelaure & Laura Tortosa-Ibanez, 2018

- “Recours”, Jaballah et associée, 2018
 “L’asile en exil”, Observatoire Asile Marseille, 2018
 “Blue Sky From Pain”, Stephanos Mangriotis & Laurence Pillant, 2016
 “Traversées de la mémoire”, Erika Thomas, 2017
 “Exodos”, Fabien Guillermond, 2017
 “Ailleurs”, Cécile Braud, 2017
 “Le chef est chef même en caleçon”, Dominique Bela, 2018

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Chapter 13

Conclusions: Participating as Power? The Possibilities and Politics of Participation



Céline Cantat

The three texts featuring in this section of the volume have been brought together by the editors because they engage in a range of ways with the issue of *participation* in the production and distribution of knowledge on migration, including visual ethnographic and artistic material. It is worth noting already at this point that the focuses and actors of the participatory methods discussed in the three texts can hardly be accounted for by a generic reference to *migrants* and *migration*. In Stefano Piemontese's text, the author encourages the active engagement of Romanian "Roma" youth in data collection, by inviting teenage research participants to conduct interviews with him, and to produce their own audiovisual accounts of their social world. The fieldwork takes place across a range of contexts – between Spain and Romania, urban life and rural communities – and involves multiple more or less successful attempts at moving away from traditional ethnographic methods and carving space for more experimental endeavours. The short videos that Piemontese's "co-researchers" shot are sometimes documenting their environment and sometimes based on fictional scripts written in advance – in ways that resemble the "ethno-fictions" Jean Rouch speaks about. Piemontese reflects on this process both from the perspective of how data is collected as well as with regards to evolving relations in the field, and the ethical and personal dilemmas they raise.

Karolína Augustová, in her investigation of irregularised mobilities in southeast Europe, mobilises photographic methods in order to explore the "hidden and securitised" spaces of violence that characterise the experience of young men attempting to cross dangerous borders in the hope of reaching western and northern Europe. Border-crossers with whom she works are involved in photo-taking, as a way to provide visual representation of their journey from their own perspective. What results is a visual documentation of the range of power devices deployed to govern and repel these young men in their attempted mobilities, which particularly

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evidences the brutality of borders and their effects on the bodies of research participants. Photo-elicitation is in turn used to reconstitute complex narratives and emotions, and to explore research participants' interpretative frameworks in less constrained ways than a codified interview would allow.

Finally, Lucie Bacon, Amandine Desille and Noémie Paté's text reflects on the authors' attempt at imagining more collective and inclusive forms of disseminating academic, artistic and activist outputs concerned with migration. Here, the emphasis of participation shifts. Its subjects are not primarily the mobile people about whose experience research or artistic projects were conducted, but rather the various communities of authors engaged in producing alternative representation around migration and which usually operate autonomously. Based on the experience of organising an event attempting to bring together members of these various scenes, the text ponders the possibility and limitations of creating platforms about international migration that operate across and beyond the boundaries that usually compartmentalise these different forms of knowledge production.

Yet, beyond the diversity in contexts and protagonists of these three texts, a number of shared concerns can be identified. On the one hand, like other texts in the volume, these contributions raise important methodological, deontological, epistemological and conceptual issues regarding (visual) knowledge production, the ethics of fieldwork and the politics of representation in migration research. On the other hand, based on their empirical experience of conducting and disseminating participatory research, the texts assess these questions with specific regards to participation, and thus propose insights into what meaningful participatory processes are, and what they can contribute in particular to social science projects about migration.

As a result, the whole spectrum of research practices is put, directly or indirectly, to the "test of participation" and a range of sometimes uncomfortable questions emerge: does meaningful participation require that researcher and researched conceptualise the research plan together before its start? What are the tools and methods available to enable participation at different stages of the research process, and what are the potential limitations and tensions that such endeavours meet? Are visual practices particularly conducive to participation? Can the co-production of knowledge, particularly but not solely in a visual form, ever be a horizontal and equal endeavour? Can participatory methods ensure a form of relevance to participants' own realities and rationales, and how do those stand in relation to the hegemonic idioms and norms of academia as an institution? Does participation *per se* guarantee an ethical stance? What is the responsibility of the researcher in terms of political and epistemological self-reflection when she encourages participation in her research?

In this commentary, I will reflect on how these questions are addressed in the three texts and on what this implies in a broader way for social sciences that aim at producing knowledge around migration that is meaningful in today's world. I first offer further reflections on dominant regimes of representations of migrants and on the consolidation of a visual knowledge-power nexus around migration. Against this background, I move on to consider how the three texts' mobilisation of

participation enables the production of counter-hegemonic accounts and knowledges of migration experiences. I then focus in particular on the issue of violence and migration, and assess the ways in which participatory methods can challenge the displacement of violence that underpins dominant and exclusionary representations of migration. The next point turns to processes of collective knowledge distribution and explores the possibilities opened up by thinking dissemination as a participatory process. The text finally concludes on a reflection on participation as a relation that is always under construction, and which while tending towards equality remains contested and unstable.

13.1 The Intersecting Economies of Migrants' Representation

The texts' focus on migration locates them within a discursive, interpretative and visual field that is increasingly characterised by a generic and negative representation of mobile people. In Europe, as in much of the Global North, this has been mirrored by exclusionary, exploitative and sometimes murderous policies and practices towards people on the move. Within this overarching frame of the generic "migrant" as always potentially threatening, the particular social groups researched in each text are also each embedded into specific symbolic and moral economies. The young people involved in Piemontese's research, as young "Roma" Romanians circulating between Romania and Spain find themselves at the intersection of at least three depictive systems: one concerned with eastern mobilities towards western Europe, one drawing on a long history of anti-Roma images and sentiments, and finally one focused on "youth gangs" as "barbaric" (Piemontese, Chap. 10, this volume). Each comes to reinforce the other towards the normalisation of discrimination.

Augustová's research participants ("17 men from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria, between 17 and 28 years old" living in a state-run camp) are similarly locked within a hegemonic regime of representation associated with threat, crisis and illegality. The hyper-visibility of borders and migration as part of what De Genova (2013) has famously coined "the border spectacle" sets the scene for a narrative of exclusion and state protection against those depicted as unwelcome outsiders. As such images come to saturate public and media discourses around migration, the space for alternative representations shrinks. In particular, the legal and physical violence exercised over the bodies of border-crossers becomes invisibilised within the grand narrative of "illegal migrants" attempting to undermine the state's territorial integrity. At the other end of the spectrum of truth regimes about illegalised travellers, the dehumanisation of camp residents as passive and ahistorical objects of humanitarian intervention, lacking agency and determination, is also a pervasive trope (Maalki, 1996).

Such images equally underlie the “hostile and inhospitable environment” which Bacon, Desille and Paté grapple with as they try to organise an event proposing different accounts and representations of migratory experiences. In their case, the challenge appears as both a series of questions regarding the possibility and challenges associated with deconstructing such hegemonic and dehumanising images of “migrants”, but also as a series of practical and organisational obstacles as, for instance, their fundraising efforts are met with “suspicion” due to the focus of their event (Bacon, Desille and Paté, Chap. 12, this volume).

13.2 Visuality and Domination

Relocating these texts into the broader economy of representation that has consolidated around migration – as well as into the specific systems of truth around each particular group in the studies – is important. In Europe, hegemonic knowledge about “migrants” is based on long histories of unequal relations between Europe and its outsides, which have been sustained by particular regimes of representations. In this context, certain narratives about “migrants” and migration occupy such an authoritative space in contemporary European discourses, that it has become extremely difficult to speak about migration outside references to them. Increasingly, migration as a subject of thought, action or representation feels limited and determined by this large network of dominant discourses and images. Hegemonic depictions of migration have also sustained and justified exploitative, neglectful and violent practices towards “migrants”. This articulation between knowledge and power is key when conceptualising research about migration and the possibilities and challenges raised by “participation”.

The relation between knowledge and power has been widely explored, leading to concepts such as that of ideology in the Marxist literature, hegemony in Gramscian interpretations and to discursive theories of power in more recent critical cultural studies analyses where emphasis on race and gender is added to reflections on class positions (see Hall, 1992; Stoddart, 2007). Of particular relevance here, is Edward Said’s seminal work on “Orientalism” – a term he coins to depict a way of knowing which produces, emphasises and stabilises particular sets of representations of the “Orient” (Said, 1978). Orientalism is a form of knowledge based on an “ontological and epistemological distinction” (p. 2) between a European “we” (modern and progressive) and an oriental “them” (backward, uncivilised and potentially dangerous). This “knowledge” relies on a series of representations which propel into existence both the “Orient” and the “West”, whose very existence, *raison d’être* and boundaries emerge in relation to each other.

Hence, very importantly, while Orientalism is a discursive and epistemological construction, it soon becomes a device of power, a tool of domination, which both justifies and in fact demands European imperialist interventions in the “East”. As such, the discourse of Orientalism, Said contends, was essential to the way European culture “was able to manage and even produce the Orient, politically, sociologically,

militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively” (p. 3). Today, the structural marginalisation of particular groups including migrants is similarly justified in the name of “insurmountable cultural and civilisational differences”, which are produced and reproduced through particular discourses and images (Cantat, 2016, p.58).

The specifically visual aspect of the power-knowledge nexus has also received attention, for instance with Deleuze’s exploration of the importance of visuality in Foucault’s thought and the necessary connection between “seeing” and “controlling” (Deleuze, 1986), in studies of visual cultures (Mirzoeff, 2008, 2011), and in analyses of the relation between systems of domination and visual artefacts (see Chaudhary (2012) for an analysis of photography and colonialism or Landau and Kaspin (2002) for an exploration of imperial visuality). These studies have greatly contributed to de-naturalising visual products by moving away from claims that they are “neutral” and accurate mediums, merely objectively copying reality. Rather, critical approaches suggest that we look at the active process of selection and interpretation through which a visual object is produced, and that we assess its meaning in relation to situated material circumstances and social relations (Hall, 1992). As per the striking introduction of John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*, “[t]he relation between what we see and what we know is never settled” (1972, p. 7). Photographs need language: they make and are given sense within broader (political) narratives. What Berger powerfully shows is that “seeing” is a situated act, and a historically constructed process. When and where we “see” something will impact on what we see and how we interpret it.

The social context of photographs is also evocatively highlighted by Yannick Le Boulicaut, when he states that “there is no such thing as a candid shot” (2013, p. 22). In his work on colonial and postcolonial photographs, Le Boulicaut (2013) observes that visual choices are active and multiple. They concern what or whom to show, how to show, from which angle and perspective, with which lens, following which composition – among other things. In this sense, if they are aesthetic and technical, they are also social and epistemological. These choices emerge from and are made possible by power relations – between the photographer and photographed as such, but also between the social groups to which each belongs. Ultimately, in his study, Le Boulicaut shows that contemporary photography still tends to respond to a visual grammar deeply embedded into a Eurocentric worldview. In other words, while also being governed by distinct norms, images (including moving images) do not operate autonomously from their social context. They are produced and seen within broader moral, symbolic, aesthetical and political economies – which shape them and which they in turn shape.

The fact that visual forms can be the expression of – and can sustain – relations of domination is acutely perceived by the people Augustová comes across as she conducts fieldwork. She reflects on the camera as a “predatory object” “of exploitation and aggression”, and on the fact that it can make those it is pointed at feel “undermined, exploited and attacked” (Augustová, Chap. 11, this volume). The relation between being seen and being controlled evoked earlier is critical, as these men are subjected to systems of surveillance aimed at exercising authority over their activities and movements. Attempts at filming or photographing people trigger

anger, which evidences their refusal to be submitted to situations of objectification or animalisation (“this is not a zoo!”). Essentially, what is being denounced here are the social relations premised on the erasure of people’s agency and right to self-representation that allow for objectifying and animalising images to be produced by external photographers. This testifies to the power of visuality – including as a tool of control and domination.

13.3 Visual Participation and Counter-Hegemony

When can visuality, then, subvert domination? In all three texts, the deconstruction and contestation of hegemonic representations about “migrants” are important objectives which visual practices are seen as advancing. Moreover, in this context, participatory practices are presented as a necessary step towards more radical epistemological reflexivity. In more or less explicit ways, the three chapters thus present participation as a tool and a process seen as holding the potential to challenge dominant regimes of discursive and visual truths.

Primarily, participation emerges as a different form of social relation *per se*, which challenges modes of interpellation of migrants based on extreme forms of exclusion and dehumanisation. Relatedly, participation shifts away from a positivist approach to knowledge production based on particular assumptions regarding the relationship between researcher and researched – one where knowledge *about* migrants is produced exclusively by researchers. This epistemology of knowledge production is reminiscent of Said’s remarks about how the West produced the Orient. Commenting on how a Western writer produces the “Oriental woman”, he comments that “she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her” (Said, 1978, p. 14). If participation means, as it is argued in the texts, the collaborative inclusion of alternative perspectives and viewpoints in the production and dissemination of knowledges around migration, it is in itself potentially subversive. Epistemologically, the reversal of gaze that is operated when the recording device (be it a pen, a recorder or a camera) is handed over to those the research studies, and the deconstruction of the pretension to objectivity and comprehensiveness of researcher-led accounts, are already counter-hegemonic gestures.

Still, participation bears questions: a set of issues arises regarding the nature of the relations that allow, or that may count as, “authentic” (non-constrained, non-tokenistic) participation – and I will come back to those later in the text. Another range of concerns focuses on the knowledge “output” of participatory research. Does a methodological process featuring such “counter-hegemonic gestures” suffice to produce counter-hegemonic knowledge? Or perhaps more precisely: under which specific conditions could the counter-hegemonic epistemological potential of participation emerge? Piemontese importantly notes that self-representation, while expected to subvert dominant discourses about discriminated groups, does not automatically produce alternative representations because of the power of

internalised stigmas and the dominance of a specific visual grammar as described above. In his text, participation in the form of asking research participants to produce representations of themselves unmediated by the ethnographer, does not seem to bear fruit in terms of producing counter-narratives.

This seems indeed a corollary of cultural hegemony: it is precisely because it takes hold over those presented as superiors *and* those deemed inferiors that it amounts to hegemony. As a system of knowledge with a pretension to comprehensiveness, embedded in dominant visual grammars and norms, it renders the possibility of articulating different views extremely difficult. Yet, in Piemontese's text, when at a later stage in his research, and following the careful crafting of relationships of trust and collaboration, participants start sending him videos of their everyday life, something seems to have changed. Piemontese explains that he finally sees "their world through their eyes". At this later stage, participatory methods thus do manage to offer a viewpoint not yet accessed by the researcher, which complexifies and deconstructs some of the images he had hitherto built of the social world of participants. Participation does, then, expend ethnography into a dialogical and polyphonic process that allows transcending the authoritative voice and presence of the ethnographer and making space for what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2008) has called "epistemological diversity".

In my view, an important point coming from Piemontese's account is that meaningful participation – one that allows the emergence of alternative narratives – is deeply connected to the social relations and forms of communication that underpin the research process. Participation in a non-perfunctory fashion seems to emerge in Piemontese's work as the source but also the product of dialogical practices of reciprocal explanation and elucidation. It needs time and construction: it is not a given. It is only under such conditions that a shift away from the mystical "sublimed gaze" of the researcher, and towards the recognition of the partiality and incompleteness of any account, can open up a space for counter-discourses and counter-visualities to emerge. What the text does not reflect on further, is the gesture through which the meanings accessed through the videos shot by participants are in turn integrated into the research *after* data collection and in the production of scientific outputs, be they textual or visual.

13.4 Participation and the Re-placement of Violence

The possibilities offered by participatory methods regarding the production of counter-hegemonic knowledges are also striking in the research undertaken by Augustová. In this case, participation helps circumvent the legal and institutional constraints within which research protagonists exist, as camp residents and illegalised travellers, and within which the ethnographer has to operate. These restrictions prevent "migrants" speaking in their own terms and researchers (but also journalists, photographers, and the broader public) from accessing certain spaces and temporalities – and contribute to keeping practices and sites of violence

remote, obscure and out of the public and ethnographic eye. Photo-taking comes as a means for the articulation of a different discourse based on migrants' testimonies. Here the authoritative voice of visibility plays in the favour of migrants who are able to document and thus testify to the violence they encounter in various hidden spaces.

Self-narration (visual and speech-based) of the coercion experienced by illegalised travellers reveals the displacement of violence that animates dominant discourses around migration in Europe, such as rhetoric of a migration crisis and of migrant illegality. In dominant representations, it is indeed Europe – its “culture” and “way of life”, its democracy and politics – that is narrated as being in crisis or under threat (Rajaram, 2016, p. 5). In this sense, dominant discourses are not only exclusionary, they are also premised on an inversion of roles between perpetrators and victims that requires an obscuring both of the social and political histories that participate in people's displacement and of the brutality experienced by migrants at Europe's multiple internal and external borders. As per Said's earlier comment, they demand that people be “spoken for”. A systematic silencing of displaced people is required in order for the hegemonic epistemology presenting Europe as a space of virtue, prosperity and safety put at risk by its threatening and unruly outsides to prevail.

Participation through photo-elicitation allows exploring the meaning of these spaces for those who pass through them from a perspective that is not predetermined by the researcher's own understanding. For instance, it reveals the experiential continuum between different loci of Augustová's participants' everyday life. The insalubrious camps in which they are forced to wait, and which are so often represented in dominant narratives as humanitarian spaces of passivity and inactivity, emerge as the antechambers of broader border-crossing projects. They appear as sites of intensive organising, information sharing, collective support and mutual care – all aspects that may go unnoticed, even by a careful ethnographer, due in particular to the many restrictions imposed on her presence in the field.

Importantly, therefore, beyond capturing a series of “experiences”, participatory visual methods also evidence modes of organising enacted by illegalised migrants which point to communities and subjectivities that are actively ignored and obscured in dominant accounts. As I explore in my own work on migration solidarity, such practices and sites challenge the dominant political architecture that centres on the nation-state and presumes that the sole subject of political action is the citizen. In such accounts, displaced people tend to be seen as all together outside of the realm of the political and are locked into their representation as objects of suspicion, in security-oriented approaches, and of compassion in humanitarian responses. As evoked, these are problematic and depoliticising representations, which invisibilise the political reasons that produce displacement in the first place, and deny people's capacity to become autonomous political subjects who act in defence of their interests and those of others in their new countries of transit or residence.

Participatory research, as a means of re-centring accounts of migration around the violence experienced by travellers but also around the active agency they deploy to organise towards various goals (linked to mobility or not), thus allows counter-hegemonic accounts. This is not to say that participation is the only possible way to

do so, and many critical academics, activists and journalists have both denounced Europe's border violence and insisted of the political subjectivities of people on the move. But, here, participatory visual research offers space for victims of abuse to articulate and narrate their experiences in their own and particular terms – including non-textual ways – while simultaneously pointing to emergent political subjectivities and communities that dominant accounts insist on denying.

13.5 Collaborative Knowledge Distribution

Participation as a counter-hegemonic tool is explored in a slightly different way in the text by Bacon, Desille and Paté. The key ambition of the described endeavour is to produce a hybrid (scientific, artistic and activist) event, in order to reach broader publics and to construct a community of praxis and knowledge that borrows from different ontologies. By decompartmentalising these different modes of engaging with migration, the authors seek to reflect on and deconstruct some of the disciplinary and institutional constraints within which researchers, artists and activists work. This is also, therefore, an initiative that starts from a recognition that knowledge is partial. It is premised on the belief that the integration of perspectives and ways of thinking from various modes of meaning-production can create alternative outcomes that subvert established “ways of seeing” (Berger, 1972).

What is also of particular interest in this text is the idea that knowledge distribution – as much as its production – can be thought of in a more open, democratic way. This requires partly moving away from the traditional forms of scholarly publications that are usually acceptable to the academic community and, importantly, required for the career advancement of scholars such as the authors of this piece. As such, investing efforts, time and resources in crafting an event that subverts the dominant norms of knowledge propositions in academia is a courageous move that resists the constantly growing pressure for the commodification of all forms of knowledge. Here, participatory and collaborative methods seem to be mobilised towards the advancement of what Lonnie Rowell and Allan Feldman (2019) have called “knowledge democracy”. Knowledge democracy, they claim, is based on the intersection of three processes: “acceptance of multiple epistemologies, affirmation that knowledge is created and represented in multiple forms (...) and understanding that knowledge is a tool ... to create a more socially just and healthy world” (Rowell & Feldman, 2019, p. 2; Hall & Tandon, 2015). While these three phenomena are of interest to all the authors, the emphasis in this text is put on the last two aspects – unlike perhaps Piemontese's and Augustová's which are primarily concerned with the recognition and inclusion of diverse perspectives.

Based on this definition, breaking boundaries between science and arts, and across disciplines, is a condition to further democratise knowledge. It allows recognising that there exist multiple non-textual ways in which knowledge about the world can be accessed and rendered. It also connects knowing with senses and emotions, in a way that traditional academia would usually occlude in the name of

scientific objectivity. Bacon, Desille and Paté refer to this possibility as an “embodied experience” that is made possible through artistic practices. This opens an avenue for important research questions where the study of the connection between migration and emotions could potentially move away from a purely pathological take – that is, from a view that only considers how negative or traumatic experiences encountered in migratory processes lead to difficult emotions conducive to particular (mental and physical) health issues. While this is of course an important issue, as the sole angle through which emotions are approached in migration contexts, it risks reproducing dominant representations where people are seen as either passive victims of their presumed circumstances, or executors of fantasised emotional-cultural norms of “origin countries” (Albrecht, 2016). A more sociological approach to emotions and migration could perhaps provide further insight on the role, functions and constraints of emotions in contexts of migration (ibid.). In this emerging field of inquiry, it seems that participatory artistic practices giving space to the affective aspects of migration are crucial to further our understanding of the emotional duress of migration and the process through which individuals establish themselves as the creators and narrators of their experiences.

As far as Bacon, Desille and Paté’s event is concerned, the authors explain that the process of coming-together has contributed to the emergence of a “reflexive” community, where the shared goal of presenting alternatives to dominant representations of migration has been reinforced and enlarged. They also note that the constraints and pitfalls of this endeavour are numerous and that the establishment of collective subjectivities based on solidarity is a challenging task, particularly considering the material conditions of the academic, artistic and activist sectors. A point that might have deserved further examination is the limited presence of the protagonists of the migratory journeys – “migrants” – at the event. The authors evoke their restrained mobility as a key reason for this absence, which certainly constitutes a frequent and deplorable obstacle. Yet it could also have been interesting to enlarge the reflection to assess its meaning in terms of who can participate in the production and the distribution of knowledge and what are the implication regarding epistemology, biases and monophony. This tension in fact leads to the final set of questions I will address, which are concerned with participation and power relations in the field and question whether participation can ever claim full horizontality.

13.6 Participation as Equality?

If participation relies on social relations, which hold the potential to disrupt dominant modes of knowledge production and distribution, a number of important questions must be addressed: what counts as participation in each particular context? What kind of social relations are conducive to participation? What socialities, between researcher and participants but perhaps also among participants, are displaced or emerge in participatory contexts? What particular responsibilities or ethical duties may participation demand? Is participation enough to contest cultural

hegemonies beyond the site of the fieldwork? And if participation is extended in an effort to challenge power relations, do others power imbalances risk emerging in participatory contexts?

All three texts are concerned with the nature and negotiation of the relation of collaboration that their authors develop with those participating in their projects. Piemontese struggles with compensating for “unequal power relations” between him and his interlocutors – arguably, this concerns both the hierarchy between researcher and researched, as well as the different classed and racial positionings which they occupy within the broader social order. Indeed, the possibility of cultural hegemony evoked previously does not emerge outside of the larger social context and its symbolic and material economies. Augustová reflects on “power positionalities” and states that she does “not want to be associated with exploitative and merely Euro-centred visual conceptualisation”. She partly links this Eurocentrism to institutional demands of the media or academia, reproducing mainstream understandings of how to document illegalised travellers. This leads for instance to photographers acting without “consent or empathy”. She denounces extractive relations when journalists or academics appear on the field only to capture preconceived images of displaced people, then immediately disappear. How can the researcher navigate such constraints in order to produce conditions that are truly conducive to participatory relations? For Bacon, Desille and Paté, the key challenges are the “hierarchies between partners”, the speed at which the norms and boundaries from the different disciplines represented in their event can come up again against each other, and the risk that collaboration without serious consideration for people’s material conditions may reproduce exploitation.

In other words, participation while allowing for an epistemological diversity that is a crucial first step towards deconstructing hegemonic modes of representation is not a short-cut for equality or horizontality. While the language of participation and diversity is powerful, it cannot *per se* mitigate the social hierarchies between participants that exist outside the “field” and also come to constitute it. Piemontese in particular explains in detail how he attempted to deal with economic imbalances in his relations with participants, by agreeing on a remuneration for their involvement and work towards his research project. To an extent, this also provided a solution to some of the ethical questions he had been grappling with, concerned with the different purpose and interest the research held for the teenage participants. It also acts as a means of empowering participants, by recognising the value of their contribution, and thus a means to deepen “authentic” participation.

Beyond this material aspect, an interesting element of Piemontese’s reconstitution of his research process is the way in which the meaning of participation seems to change as relationships are built and develop among the participatory group. On the one hand, as trust and mutual understanding are constructed between the researcher and participants, participatory relations seem more possible. On the other hand, it seems that participation requires that all those involved understand, appropriate and value the purpose and logic of the research process and project. Indeed, participation seems conditional on how relevant the research is to the researched, and to their own understanding of what their social needs and

issues are. This perhaps implies that radical participation towards counter-hegemonic objectives requires (or is greatly facilitated by) the early involvement of those the research studies in the very formulation of questions, hypotheses and objectives.

13.7 Conclusion: Theorising Participation

Here more theorisation of research participation might be required – one that recognises its contested nature and politics. Such a reflexive and critical stance on participatory methods has emerged in development studies, in response to the normalisation of “participatory development” (Hickey & Mohan, 2005). Among other critiques, Cornwall speaks of participation as an “infinitely malleable term” (2006, p. 50), which has been applied to a wide range of situation and for an infinite number of purposes. While important pieces such as those in this section have been written on empirical experiences of participatory research, a broader theory of participation is perhaps still missing. This might be connected to neoliberal academia’s growing need to identify a clear authorial voice that can be credited and referenced, and whose relevance and competitiveness can be quantified through scientific rankings and indexes. While participation is indeed becoming more common in scientific research, it remains curiously under-conceptualised.

It would be of interest, in particular, to assess the distinction between “participation from above” – as an increasingly fashionable methodological approach that can easily slip into tokenism – and “participation from below” as a powerful demand made by communities for being included in studies that concern them. In most actual research processes, logics of participation from above and below will likely interact and the researcher, herself acting under various constraints, will have to navigate the resulting tensions.

In any case, the reflections brought together in this text perhaps indicate that participation cannot be only assessed as a process or a set of relations, nor can it be only accounted through more conceptual analyses of knowledge and power. Participation in a radical sense is about allowing people to set the agenda and to thus place certain demands on it. A holistic conceptualisation of participation must therefore also be concerned with its results and concrete effects.

In the context of migration research, which unfolds in an extremely politicised, polarised and indeed hostile environment, the measure according to which results may be realistically assessed is hard to establish. Additionally, as mentioned, institutional pressure over academics, and particularly those – as in the case of the authors of these texts – who are in early and precarious stages of their career, makes it very difficult to avoid traditional forms of rendering accumulated knowledge such as scientific articles and events. Attempts at doing so might nonetheless occur, as exemplified in Bacon, Desille and Paté’s work. Change might be less spectacular and take place at the individual level for research participants as captured in the

notion of “empowerment” – a hope the reader shares regarding participants in Piemontese’s research. Or, like in Augustová’s text, visual products created in the course of the research may be in turn mobilised for advocacy and campaigning purposes.

In any case, the three texts of this section certainly encourage us to think through participation in a critical, reflexive and holistic manner, and to undertake further conceptual work around its many possibilities and potential limits. Ultimately, then, the texts expand our understanding of how participation can work in practice, but also of what it should tend towards in principle. They powerfully remind us of the social responsibility of researchers and inspire us to explore participatory methods as a means to ensure that our work gives space to researched groups, so that they may not only narrate their own experience and assert their political subjectivity, but also more actively set research agendas.

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Part IV
Representation

Chapter 14

Chant Down the Walls: Exploring the Potential of Video Methods in the Study of Immigrant Politics and Social Movements



Davide Gnes

14.1 Introduction

When I arrive on site, I see a group of people with drums, amplified guitar and bass, and other instruments. They are standing on a very narrow sidewalk opposite a grey, massive building, with several rows of tiny windows. I am right in front of the detention centre [LAPD's Metropolitan Detention Centre, Los Angeles]. [...] I am handed a banner to hold. Instinctively, I take out my phone and I start filming some of this. The atmosphere is exciting. Some people are dancing, others are chanting slogans. [...] I see that people next to me keep waving towards the centre, but only after speaking with one of them it dawns on me the reason: the immigrant inmates can see us and maybe even hear the music being played outside. I look more carefully and I notice several human silhouettes standing behind the barred windows of the centre.

The above vignette and footage frames describe a performance by the *Jornaleros del Norte* (day laborers of the North), a music band composed of Latino day labourers and part of the National Day Labourer Organising Network (NDLON), an immigrant rights organisation based in Los Angeles. The occasion is the “Chant Down the Walls” initiative, a weekly gathering of immigrant activists in front of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Detention Centre. On the one side of the street, the band is performing. Some people are dancing, others (including myself) are holding banners. Others are recording and taking pictures of the action, moreover offering their interpretation of what is happening for an external audience. On the other side stands the towering detention centre, holding undocumented immigrants awaiting deportation. I try to record as much of the action as possible in my field diary, but it

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is only after analysing footage of the action shared by NDLO staff¹ that I notice a key detail: lights are being switched on and off inside the detention centre, in sync with the music. Inmates are attempting to communicate with the outer world and are responding to the band's outreach efforts.

This small example shows how video footage can contribute to capturing complex social interaction, in this case between activists (outsiders), inmates (insiders) and the public (externals). It also hints at how, in the context of a political action, video-making and image-taking play a role in themselves in shaping social interaction. In this chapter, I am interested in discussing how video methods can complement more conventional qualitative data and methodologies. I will here particularly examine the potential of video as data source and as process. In order to do so, I will draw on a few examples from my fieldwork in Los Angeles, and particularly from my experience filming the music performances of the *Jornaleros del Norte*. The structure of the chapter is organised as follows. The first section briefly discusses the potential of video in social science, and particularly for researching migration and collective action. The second section describes the circumstances and terms under which I began creating and collecting audio-visual material in connection with my research on immigrant rights activism in Los Angeles. The third section describes how video provided me with an opportunity to gain access to research participants and to engage in reciprocity. The fourth and fifth sections draw on a video sequence to highlight the potential of recorded video data to complement interviews, written notes, archive material and audio data. The sixth section instead underscores how video as process can help generate additional data as well as theoretical insights.

14.2 Video as a Tool to Study Migrants and Politics

Just like images, video has been an integral part of anthropology and sociology since the beginnings of those disciplines (Banks, 2001; Emmison, Smith, & Mayall, 2012; Erickson, 2011). After a period of disenchantment, video has since the 1970s and 1980s become a common tool for researchers in disciplines as diverse as workplace studies (Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010, pp. 6–7), education (Moss & Pini, 2016), social psychology (Erickson, 2011), sociology of conflict (Collins, 2008; Klusemann, 2009). Researchers have argued that both the recording process and the analysis of the recorded material offer a multitude of possibilities for studying social phenomena in a way that interviews or other more conventional methods alone cannot (Fele & Knoblauch, 2012; Knoblauch, 2012). Resurgence of video as a research tool can be partly explained by the increasing technological sophistication and affordability of audio-video recording devices (Heath et al., 2010; Knoblauch, Tuma, & Schnettler, 2014). Renewed interest in video also owes to the growing importance that audio-visual recordings themselves have acquired for the general

¹The frames displayed above are taken from this footage.

public as a tool to communicate and interact with others (both off- and online) (Knoblauch et al., 2014).

Alternative methodological standpoints underpin different uses and purposes of video (Harris, 2016; Banks, 2001; Pink, 2013). Realist approaches, more common in sociology, psychology, or criminology, focus on video as content in order to generate insights about social processes, approaching video as a relatively neutral (and direct) representation of reality (Heath et al., 2010). Some of these approaches, both quantitative and qualitative, entail the design of highly formalised data collection and analysis procedures, drawing exclusively on externally generated video material (Collins, 2008; Klusemann, 2009; Levine, Taylor, & Best, 2011). In such studies, demonstrating causality in interaction is perhaps the main analytical concern (Nassauer & Legewie, 2018). Others strands of video research, such as ethnomethodology, while similarly concerned with studying video primarily as data, instead adopt an interpretive approach that tries to account for the social construction of human interaction (Knoblauch, Schnettler, Raab, & Soeffner, 2012). Scholars in this tradition combine researcher-generated video material with participant observation or other qualitative methods in order to enhance the contextual knowledge for understanding the video material – an approach also known as *videography* (Knoblauch et al., 2014). In all of these approaches, the main object of analysis is video itself rather than the process through which video is produced. The role of the researcher is problematised only to the extent that any potential biases or behaviour may affect the validity or reliability of recorded data (Heath et al., 2010; Nassauer & Legewie, 2018).

On the other side of the spectrum, a “reflexive” perspective, emerged in anthropology under the influence of post-modernism, has called for greater attention to the socially constructed nature of video representations (Bates, 2015; Harris, 2016; Pink, 2013). Within this perspective, video is not a neutral data-recording device; knowledge “is produced in conversation and negotiation between informants and researcher, rather than existing as an objective reality that may be recorded and taken home in a note book, camera film or tape” (Pink, 2013, p. 79). It is therefore difficult to disentangle the video product from the conditions of its production, and the recording process should be an object of analysis as much as the final product (Banks, 2001; Pink, 2013). It follows that researchers in this tradition also tend to favour participatory and action research methodologies, involving research participants in co-creation and sometimes even co-analysis of data (Gubrium & Harper, 2013; Harris, 2016).

In migration and ethnic studies, researchers have drawn attention to the analytical potential of audio-visual material, particularly to complement methods such as interviews and statistics (Ball & Gilligan, 2010; Gold, 2004; Martiniello, 2017). Nevertheless, use of visual methods in this field remains rather limited (Yalaz & Zapata-Barrero, 2018; see also introduction to this volume). Moreover, the few migration scholars incorporating visual methods in their work have mostly focused on still images (Martiniello, 2017; Ball & Gilligan, 2010; Gold, 2004; Fedyuk,

2012; but see Piemontese, Verstappen, Desille and MacQuarie, this volume, for examples with video).²

Likewise, the visual has a long history in social movements and public protests, often grounded in the connection between arts and cultural practices on the one side and collective identity formation and political mobilisation on the other (Jasper, 1997; Reed, 2005). Researching such practices is even more relevant for migrants who, due to their liminal position and legal vulnerability within societies of destination, are often constrained with respect to the type and forms of politics they can engage in, and moreover face the challenge of doing politics with very limited financial means. At the same time, unlike natives, migrants can draw on the cultural repertoire of their places of origin (or previous settlement) to produce social and cultural innovation, including in organisations (Gnes, 2018; Kasinitz, 2014; Levitt, 1998). Interpretive researchers have argued that video may be a powerful means to convey “the epistemologies and experienced realities of ...people” (Pink, 2013, p. 5), as well as to investigate individual and collective forms of knowledge, such as *tacit, practical or elusive knowledge* (Torald, Islam, & Mangia, 2018), that would be difficult to capture otherwise. In the following sections I would like to highlight different ways in which video has facilitated, enriched and expanded my understanding of migrant political action.

14.3 The Case Study: NDLO, the Jornaleros del Norte and Immigrant Activism in Los Angeles

This chapter describes the use of visual methods in the context of my PhD research on immigrant rights activism in Los Angeles, California. When I began my inquiry, I was primarily interested in uncovering the historical elements that have made Southern California such an extraordinary site for progressive politics, organisational innovation and inter-ethnic collaboration (Gnes, 2018; Milkman, Bloom, & Narro, 2010). To address this question, I initially relied on archive material from immigrant organisations and local foundations, as well as on interviews with local activists. However, while in the city, I also encountered the “there-and-now” of immigrant activism. It was during one of my fieldwork stays, on November 2014, that I stumbled upon the “Chant-Down-the Walls” initiative (described above) and the activist work of the National Day Labourer Organising Network (NDLO) and its in-house band, the *Jornaleros del Norte*.

NDLO was founded in Los Angeles between 2000 and 2002 as a US nationwide network of immigrant-led advocacy organizations (Dziembowska, 2010). Its coordinating structure, led by Salvadoran organiser Pablo Alvarado and a handful of supporting staff, soon became an organization in its own right, primarily focused on

²Outside of migration and ethnic studies, anthropologists have however explored the use of video to research migration (see, for example: Haaken & O’Neill, 2014; Torresan, 2011; Harris, 2016).

supporting Latino day labourers³ (Nicholls, 2016; Valenzuela Jr., 2003). Alvarado, an immigrant himself with a past as educator and community organiser back home, came to Los Angeles in 1990. Struck by the dreadful conditions of day labourers, many of whom were virtually illiterate, Alvarado began to work as a volunteer educator with the Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA), a local community organization (Bacon, 2008; Gnes, 2018). In the mid-1990s, together with Salvadoran day labourer, activist and musician Lolo Cutumay, Alvarado founded the *Jornaleros del Norte* (or “day labourers of the North”) (Gnes, 2018). Alvarado and Cutumay invited other immigrant day labourers with music skills to join the band. Its members, many of whom have since come and gone, mainly come from Mexico, Salvador and Guatemala. The band began to perform for other day labourers at parking lots, but has since played at political demonstrations, marches, labour union strikes or fundraisings. Since Alvarado’s move to the newly created NDLO in the early 2000s, the *Jornaleros* have become the organisation’s unofficial “in-house band.”

The “Chant Down the Walls” campaign was conceived by NDLO staff on May 1st 2014, during the annual May Day Rally. As the demonstration approached downtown LA’s Metropolitan Detention Centre, the *Jornaleros del Norte* were performing on a moving truck. The band members noted that several detainees were curiously peeking through the narrow window slits, waving their hands. NDLO organizers realised that inmates – most of them awaiting deportation– could hear the music, and considered that performing in front of such centres could bring detainees some measure of relief.⁴ In October and November 2014, as well as intermittently throughout 2015 and 2016, NDLO organized music events in front of detention centres and prison facilities across California and beyond (e.g. Georgia and Alabama). The events were organised to protest the surge in immigrant deportations carried out by the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and featured the *Jornaleros del Norte* but also other Southern Californian artists and bands.

Back in November 2014, attending Chant Down the Walls provided me with a window into NDLO’s bold political work, all the more extraordinary in light of the organisation’s very limited financial and human resources. I kept a field diary of my attendance and recorded some short videos with a low-quality smartphone – mainly with the intention of preserving it as a memory of what I had experienced. It was only upon my return in Europe, after attending a training on social science filmmaking at Budapest’s Central European University (CEU), that I was pushed to reflect on the potential sociological value of video. Such course also provided me with the basics of filmmaking and film production. My initial plan was to shoot a

³In Los Angeles, many Central American and Mexican immigrants, due to their limited formal education credentials and undocumented status, can find employment only in highly informalized and unprotected niches of the labour market as construction, gardening or carpentry (Valenzuela Jr., 2003). Such jobs are generally solicited on a daily basis – hence the name “day labourer”, or *jornalero* in Spanish, to designate those workers – at informally designated street corners and parking lots throughout Southern California, where recruiters come to recruit their workforce for the day.

⁴Omar León, NDLO organiser, personal interview.

short documentary about the band. However, I began to develop a sense that video would also prove useful to better understand NDLO's political work in action.

Between February and May 2015, I followed NDLO staff and the *Jornaleros del Norte* in several of their public actions, recording video footage and keeping written diary entries whenever possible. The over tens of hours of footage covered public events, such as protests, concerts or demonstrations, as well as private rehearsals and interviews. In addition, I also collected video footage of previous actions by the *Jornaleros* and NDLO: such material was either publicly available on YouTube or was in the possession of NDLO's staff, who agreed to share it with me. Drawing on the example of other migration scholars (Gold, 2004), I used video as a tool to complement other qualitative data. I conducted 17 recorded interviews with NDLO's staff and with members of the *Jornaleros*, some of which were also recorded on video. I also collected organizational material produced by the staff for NDLO's official website (press releases, public statements, reports), as well as by the band itself (their CDs and music). In the following sections I will discuss more in detail some of challenges, opportunities and limitations that came from using video and from combining it with other data.

14.4 The Process of Filming: Access, Role in the Field and Reactions

Some of the most challenging aspects of qualitative research are about gaining access to the field and establishing an ethical working relationship with research participants. It is common (and understandable) to encounter mistrust, scepticism or outward hostility when approaching potential research participants. In the context of this research, while video certainly brought to the fore other types of ethical concerns, it also allowed me to gain access to and create a more equal relationship with research respondents.

Unlike other researchers that have chronicled immigrant activism from an insider position, I approached advocacy organisations in Los Angeles as a sympathetic outsider but without strong activist credentials.⁵ Gaining access to the field and to research participants was difficult. In early 2014, still unaware of the *Chant Down the Walls* initiative, I had already tried to reach out to several NDLO's staff via email and phone but had received no response to my interview requests. In November 2014, when an acquaintance informed me of the actions at the detention centres, I attended mainly out of curiosity since I had already given up on interviewing the staff. The prospect of engaging with the band on a documentary project, however,

⁵ My sympathy for immigrant organizations working on inclusion stems from my own background as son of a foreign-born mother, as well as from my experience in non-profit organizations in Europe and in the Middle East. Those experiences have also made me more aware of the entrenched inequalities within contemporary migration systems and of my privileged position therein as a male, white, middle-class European citizen.

gave me renewed motivation upon my return in Los Angeles in January 2015. As it turned out, it also provided me with a more “useful” role in the field for the band and NDLON.

I started following NDLON and the *Jornaleros* on Facebook and Twitter to learn about their upcoming actions/concerts. I became a familiar presence at their public events, including outside of Los Angeles.⁶ I introduced myself to NDLON staff and the band, and I began helping out with practicalities, such as setting up the music infrastructure, holding banners, or carrying instruments and amplifiers. In the meantime, one of my dissertation supervisors, who had a direct connection with NDLON’s leadership, supported my case. When I finally approached Pablo with the idea of filming the *Jornaleros del Norte*, including recording a video interview with him, he agreed. It was on the day of our first interview, at NDLON’s headquarters, that he proposed I stay longer and also film *Jornaleros del Norte*’s rehearsal. There I had the chance to formally meet all the members of the band. I presented my proposal for filming the work of the band in the context of my PhD research on immigrant activism, with the end goal of also making a documentary. I expressed my admiration for NDLON’s work and for the music of the *Jornaleros*, and exchanged some words with the percussionist and the drummer. They were in fact surprised that somebody coming from Europe would take an interest in the band, but even more that I could understand and speak some Spanish.⁷

While band members on that evening agreed to be filmed, we also later discussed the terms and conditions of filming. In general terms, we agreed that any resulting product (i.e. documentary), beyond the fact that it could not be distributed for profit, would also have to be approved by the organisation and the members of the band before being publicly distributed. Soon thereafter, we also agreed I would share all my video footage with the organisation at the end of my film project. This possibility first came up in an exchange with Marco Loera, NDLON’s communication coordinator, and Pablo Alvarado following a performance of the *Jornaleros* where Marco was also present and filming:

Marco is packing up his video gear so I take the opportunity to go introduce myself. [...] We start talking about the footage. He thanks me for filming the band around these days [as he was not around], and tells me they are working on a crowdfunding campaign for the next album. I tell him I’d be happy to share footage with him if he needs that for the campaign, he thanks me for that. He says that if I need footage from previous stuff, like the old *Chant Down the Walls*, he’d be happy to share it with me. Pablo joins the conversation. [He must have been listening to our exchange] He looks at me: “So you are going to share your footage with us, right? That’s the agreement, right?” [...] “Yes, I am going to use the material for my own research, but I will also share it with you” He goes, “good, that’s the agreement

⁶One action took place in Adelanto, a desert town in San Bernardino County 140 km from Los Angeles, and almost 3 h away due to the dreadful traffic jams that congest Southern California.

⁷While perfectly comfortable in speaking English, all band members are native Spanish speakers and generally talk to each other in Central American Spanish rather than English. Initially thinking I was an American graduate student based in Los Angeles, they showed surprise and curiosity when I mentioned my studies in the Netherlands and Spain and my Italian origin. Notwithstanding the clear differences in our life trajectories, it was perhaps this common experience of being “from somewhere else”, as well as our exchanges about colorful Spanish expressions and the *marimba*, a type of xylophone very popular in Guatemala, that facilitated our relation.

then. You share it with us, and you can use it for yourself [...] We'll also give you the old material, and the pictures, you can use all that."

This exchange, recorded in my field diary, prompted further conversations with other staff and the rest of the band, who proposed that NDLO and the *Jornaleros* would have the right to use my footage for their own promotional purposes. On the one hand, video therefore gave me the opportunity to provide the organisation with something of potential value in return.⁸ Such reciprocity, as hinted above, also entailed I could access and use the organisation's own video, photo and other archive material –very valuable material that would have otherwise been inaccessible. On the other, my role of researcher/film-maker shaped my field experience in a different way from what I was used to as an interviewer. For example, I felt I could better justify to others spending several hours a day at NDLO's offices – particularly to staff not involved with the band. As a result, I also had the impression that it became easier not only to interview band members but also other NDLO staff who may have otherwise been difficult to reach.

Filming NDLO's and the *Jornaleros*' activities afforded new possibilities as much as it raised additional ethical concerns (Pink, 2013). Securing the consent of the band to be filmed did not eliminate the risks of me potentially harming its members, the organisation and/or bystanders (particularly in situations in which it was practically impossible to inform the latter of me filming). This risk may be significant in the case of an advocacy and service-provider organisation working with immigrants in vulnerable situations, particularly in the current polarised political context around immigration. For this reason, while I tried to film as much as possible, I continued to ask the band for permission for filming events and situations, moreover relying on its members' word-of-mouth to learn about the agenda of their performances (and therefore implicitly giving them the option of *not* having me around). Regarding data handling, I saved all collected video footage on three separate external drives, which were then encrypted and password-protected.

For this chapter, I drew reference to snapshots of video footage material – both self-generated and externally generated.⁹ To protect the identity of external participants, I used post-production imaging software to blur their faces so as to make them unrecognisable. Once this chapter was finalised, I shared it with NDLO staff and *Jornaleros*' del Norte band members, who gave their permission to appear – recognisable – in the footage stills. As cautionary measure, I included the real names only of those individuals who are part of NDLO's staff and are already known public figures (and who agreed to be named). Lastly, I sought and obtained permission by the original owner – a member of NDLO staff – to include here snapshots extracted from his footage (Frames 14.1–14.14).

⁸Whether my video footage would actually prove useful (or usable) for NDLO's purposes is a whole different story. While I shared all my footage material at the end of my fieldwork in May 2015, to my knowledge it has not yet been used by the organization for any promotional purposes.

⁹Due to technical and creative challenges, and much to my regret, the documentary about the band has so far remained an unfinished project. This also means that I made no video footage publicly available.



Frames 14.1–14.2 The Jornaleros del Norte playing facing the detention centre



Frames 14.3–14.4 Activists facing the detention centre holding banners



Frames 14.5–14.7 Activists dancing while the Jornaleros del Norte are performing



Frames 14.8–14.13 Close-up of portion of LA Metropolitan Detention Centre. Light inside a window slit is switched on and off



Frame 14.14 Inmates inside detention centre waving at activists and bystanders outside

In this section I highlighted how video provided me with new research opportunities and allowed me to engage with research participants in a way that ensured some level of reciprocity. I will now move on to discuss a concrete example of the social interactions I captured on video.

14.5 Using Video to Record Micro-interactions in the Field

A key aspect of video data is its ability preserve the temporal sequence and situational arrangements of a particular context, and to allow for endless reproduction and manipulation for analysis and interpretation (Heath et al., 2010; Knoblauch et al., 2014). Video also allows to record fine details of social interaction, including verbal and non-verbal communication (gaze, gesture, facial expression, etc.) – some of which may go unnoticed by the observer (Nassauer & Legewie, 2018; Harris, 2016; see also Collins, 2008). In this section I would like to draw on a video sequence to show how it complemented other types of data to better understand NDLO's political work through the performance of the *Jornaleros del Norte*. In particular, I intend to show how video allowed to capture the interactive dimension of the relationship between the band, the message of its music and the audience.

In his interviews with me, Pablo Alvarado claimed that the idea of creating a band of day labourers was inspired by one of the key tenets of popular education – the use of culturally resonant practices as a community-building tool to foster solidarity amongst stigmatized groups. The political dimension of the band's music



Frame 14.15 Parking lot. Two members of the Jornaleros, one of them carrying part of the drum set, wave at three men. They greet each other. The Jornaleros invite them to join them

became clear when I began analysing the titles of the songs and their lyrics.¹⁰ For example, the *Corrido de Industry*, written by Omar Sierra- one of the first day labourers to join the band in the 1990s – describes the musician’s dreadful encounter with immigration authorities in the midst of a health check-up in the city of Industry. *Serenata a un indocumentado*, written by Omar León and sung by Loyda Alvarado, instead tells the story of a pained woman who comes every night in front of the detention center where the husband is detained awaiting deportation, hoping to communicate with her husband. *Ese guey no paga*, an upbeat cumbia tune written by Omar León, recalls instead the familiar experience of many day labourers of not getting paid by their employers after a hard day’s work. The lyrics are therefore strongly informed by the lived experiences of immigrants living in Southern California. The style of music is rather eclectic – *cumbias*, *rancheras*, *reggae*, *corridos* – reflection of the skills and taste of leading band members, but nevertheless reflecting a range of music genres that resonate in Mexico and Central America.

On the basis of this information, one may well understand the band’s intention and mission. However, she will still wonder about the actual unfolding of the performance, the audience’s reaction, or the resonance of the message. These questions are difficult to answer only with interviews, documents and artefacts. To show the potential of video, I will then take the example of one of my first experiences accompanying the Jornaleros del Norte, starting with my field notes.

¹⁰I collected all the CDs recorded by the band: *Cruzando Fronteras* [“Crossing borders”], *Que no pare la lucha* [“Don’t stop the fight”], *Hatze contar* [“Make yourself count”], and *Chant Down the Walls/Tumbando Muros*.



Frames 14.16–14.17 Men pointing their arms at white pick-up truck, trying to catch the attention of its driver [out of the frame in frame 16]. In frame 17 the truck lowers its right window but does not stop. Men in the frame do not pay attention to the band



Frames 14.18–14.19 Men are standing near the fence [some 15–20 m from the band]. One man is tentatively looking in the direction of the band, another one is busy with his phone. Band member looks in their direction and shouts: “Come closer, we’re about to start!”

We’ve been driving for a while, Pablo and Omar looking for the ‘right’ place to stop for the band’s performance. There is no official action or demonstration planned for the day, so I am not sure what to expect [...]. I am in the car with Omar, Julio and Eduardo, trailing Pablo and Fernando’s pick-up [...] We see Pablo’s car turning right at the crossroads and entering a Home Depot parking lot. Omar shouts, ‘look, right there!’; he turns there too and follows Pablo. There are about some 10–15 people standing on the side of the parking lot, the one closest to the main road [opposite the Home Depot]. They look like they could be between their early 20s to mid-40s - most of them are dark-skinned. They are wearing baggy brown work pants, t-shirts or basketball sport jerseys, some also straw hats. [...] We park in a corner. I take out my Nikon camera, I attach the external microphone on top, I prepare the GoPro and start filming.

The following sub-section presents the analysis of several video sequences spanning the performance of the *Jornaleros del Norte* over a period of roughly 35–40 min. I recorded interaction with two different cameras: a GoPro HERO4 and a Nikon DSLR camera with a ZoomHn5 external microphone. Once on the location of the performance, I used the GoPro as tripod-held camera with a broader frame of view and the Nikon as a hand-held camera for close-ups. I selected this scene for analysis because the quality and extensiveness of the video data were sufficient to capture important moments of the interaction between the band and the audience. I catalogued the video clips and proceeded to summarise their content, moreover using the audio feed to include verbal communication between those participating in the



Frame 14.20 The Jornaleros del Norte begin to play. Here they are performing *Ese gey no paga* (first time)



Frame 14.21 [The Jornaleros are about to start playing the *Corrido de Industry*]
Audience: in listening mode, but not actively engaging. Still at 15 m from the band
Band member [voice over from the other side of the frame]: “This was written by a friend of mine, Omar, who wrote this and also started the band. The *Corrido de Industry* is about an immigration raid [*redada*] that took place nearby”



Frame 14.22 The Jornaleros are playing the *Corrido de Industry*
 Audience: moved 10 m closer to the action. Posture is more relaxed, everyone is looking in the direction of the band

interaction. Using post-production software, I selected a number of video frames that are exemplary of a number of band-audience interactions, and added a short description of visual cues and a transcription of the audio feed for each instance.¹¹ Since all spoken exchanges take place in Spanish, they have been translated into English for the reader's convenience.

14.6 Sequence Analysis

With the above footage I tried to capture the more fine-grained details of the band-audience interaction, including the shifts in attention span, mood and general attitude of the audience towards the band. The Jornaleros quickly take out their string instruments, set up the drums and start playing. Day labourers, intent on waiting for potential employers and recruiters, are their audience. Video shows the progression of this relationship over the course of the musical performance, including the changing spatial composition of the scene and the verbal and bodily

¹¹ This method loosely draws inspiration from Video Data Analysis (VDA) (Nassauer & Legewie, 2018) and Sequential Analysis (Knoblauch et al., 2014).



Frames 14.23–14.24 [after completing first round of songs]

Band member: “Please add us on Facebook, so that we can invite you when we have concerts. We’ll be playing also at the May Day Marches. And this song *Ese guey no paga*, it sounds funny but in reality...”

Audience: “Play it again! The song about the sleazy employer... [whistling]”

Band member: “Yeah, [you guys feel] exploited, right? And what is the motto of the day labourers...? A worked day [*dia trabajado*] is a...”

Audience: “...paid day! [*dia pagado*]”

Band member: “And if they [the employers] want to pay you with a cheque...?”

Audience: “No! no! Cash!” [a man makes a gesture with his hand to mimic handing over cash]

Band member: “Yes, only cash! And [you will accept] nothing of the sort, like “tomorrow I pick you up again and I pay you...””

A man from the crowd: “Here a friend of mine had a bad experience as he was beaten by an employer”

Another man: “Yes, here always comes somebody that doesn’t pay, that’s Mr. Lopez...”

Audience: “Yes, that’s true!”



Frames 14.25–14.26 Performing *Ese guey no paga* [second time]

Band member: [Sings *Ese guey no paga*]

“I jumped on a truck of sleazy employer [indicates a pick-up truck to the right]

And I realised that I was a migrant

And I realised that I was a migrant”



Frames 14.27–14.28 Performing *Ese guey no paga* [second time, continues]

Audience: smiling, relaxed posture, taking pictures with their phone

Band member: [Sings *Ese guey no paga*]

“I went to earn a living [*chambear*] here at the Home Depot

I went to earn a living here at the Home Depot”



Frame 14.29 End of the concert. Exchanging contact details and handshakes

Audience: smiling and engaging with one of the band members. One person is holding the band member’s accordion while he’s talking

communication. In particular, it shows how the attitude of several members of the audience transitions from suspicion and/or indifference towards the band to active engagement (if not support). As the *Jornaleros* begin to play, the day labourers are drawn in by the music, but they remain at distance. Some are taking videos, some keep looking in other directions, hoping that one of the pick-up trucks will stop to hire them, others remains with their arms crossed, unsure of what to make of this all. But slowly, the content of the lyrics sinks in. Several people get closer, some even smile. The final frame shows the band and the day labourers discussing at arms’ length, as if the initial barriers have been broken.

The scenes featuring the performance of *Ese guey no paga* and the discussions around it are perhaps the most illuminating to understand the political function of the music of the *Jornaleros del Norte*. Omar takes the end of the first round of songs to return to the message of the song, warning day labourers against accepting checks from their employers, as the latter may make them impossible to cash. This opening works like a trigger for the audience, that recognises a very familiar situation, and encourages them to share their own (or their friends') negative experiences with abusive employers. At the very least, the song triggers a reflection amongst the audience – testified by the fact that at the very end several day labourers approach Pablo and Omar to ask for more information about NDLO's work.

It is worth discussing also the limitations of this approach. First of all, due to the technological limitations of the devices (quality of video recording, lens capabilities, battery constraints), as well as to my own limitations in handling the recording equipment, video clips significantly varied in length, quality and usability. Second, my choices regarding composition, angle and distance also limited my capacity for comprehensive analysis, (e.g. close-up shots on certain actors limited the possibility of simultaneously observing the interaction among individuals, while wider angles made it more difficult to observe changes in facial expressions and bodily movements). This challenge was only partially offset by using two cameras (a fixed and a hand-held one). Third, recording multi-directional, good-quality audio also proved very difficult – this making transcription sometimes very challenging. In spite of these limitations – some of which I believe may be solved with better equipment and mastery of the equipment – I believe video holds great potential to complement existing qualitative methods, particularly for the study of micro- social interaction.

14.7 Reactivity and the Use of Video to Generate Different Insights and Data

In the previous section, I treated video footage primarily as an “objective” record of a given social interaction. That is, I focused on video primarily as content in itself, paying less attention to the process of filming. In this last section, drawing on the discussion on reactivity, I would instead like to show how video, and particularly the very filming process and its function for research participants, holds the potential for generating alternative insights. I would also like to suggest that film-making itself can help generate different data in combination with other visual methods, for example through recorded photo-elicitation.

One of the issues often discussed in relation to video methods is reactivity, that is, of how the presence of a camera may alter people's supposedly “authentic” behaviour. This issue, of course, relates to the more fundamental debate regarding the nature of video representation. Depending on their methodological standpoints, researchers have tried to either minimise reactivity, in order to preserve the “objective” character of the interactions recorded, or rather to use reactivity in order to

gather different kinds of data that are effectively co-constructed together with research participants (Banks, 2001; Harris, 2016; Knoblauch et al., 2014; Pink, 2013). Pink (2013, p. 80), a proponent of reflexivity, has argued that a “camera becomes part of the its user’s identity and an aspect of the way he or she communicates with others”, and that “ethnographic video makers need to be aware of how the camera and video footage become an element of the play between themselves and informants, and how these are interwoven into discourses and practices in the research context.” Others have instead argued that the issue of reactivity has been exaggerated, since it is wrong to assume that participants are always preoccupied with the camera (Heath et al., 2010). For this reason, they recommend to address the issue as it presents itself –noting when participants notice the camera, and for what reasons, and how that impacts their behaviour (Heath et al., 2010).

Regarding external audiences, it is difficult to precisely assess how my presence affected the scene. In the above scene with day labourers, my presence seemed to draw only some curious looks but no open reactions. I was introduced as part of the band crew, and I was in fact not the only person filming: Marco, NDLO’s communication officer, was also present onsite, and with bulkier equipment than mine. In other situations – a concert at the fundraising event of a community-based organisation, a demonstration on May Day, a rally organised by a local union of port workers – I was in fact surrounded by tens, if not hundreds of other people taking pictures and/or recording video, and I barely drew any attention from the attendees (except when they were chanting slogans directly in my microphone).¹²

Regarding the members of the Jornaleros, my experience of filming revealed instead the key role that video played (and still plays to this date) for NDLO’s outreach, advocacy and campaigning. As I was to learn during my fieldwork, NDLO staff and band members regularly posted videos and pictures of their actions on YouTube and on social media platforms (especially Facebook and Twitter). Those included amateur clips shot by individual staff via their smartphones, as well as professional footage prepared by NDLO’s communication staff.¹³ Reciprocity agreements of the type I mentioned in an earlier section therefore made a lot of sense for the organisation: through video, NDLO’s actions – including the performances of the Jornaleros – can reach a plurality of audiences, from those who are present to those who will potentially view it online. In this context, as film-maker – embodying the prospect of potentially bringing the work of the Jornaleros to others’ fruition – I moreover contributed to creating social situations that may have not otherwise taken place.¹⁴

¹²As others have argued, protests and demonstrations are typical social situations where most participants expect the possibility of being recorded or photographed and are therefore used to adjusting their behavior “for the cameras” (Nassauer & Legewie, 2018).

¹³See, for example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMxC-Dp-wUg>

¹⁴In one instance, we (the band and I) drove to a parking lot that had a historical and emotional significance for the band, only to find out that the place had since changed and day labourers were no longer congregating there. Even though there was nobody there besides the band and myself, Pablo told me to take out the camera and start filming. He began with a speech where he recalled

Last, I would like to also suggest that video may also be used, to its turn, to create new data, for example by eliciting in research participants long-forgotten memories (Banks, 2001). While I was at NDLO's office, waiting for a rehearsal to start, I was shown by one of the staff old archive material including tapes, pictures and documents. Some of the photos depicted old members of the band during the 1990s and the early 2000s. The film project provided me with the perfect excuse to ask Pablo Alvarado to describe a few of the pictures to me, particularly to reminisce about the early days of the band. It is in this context that I learned more about the lives of former members, as well as about the internal politics within the band.

14.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I drew on my fieldwork experience in Los Angeles to discuss the potential of video for qualitative research on migration and political action. I focused specifically on three aspects: access to the field, research respondents and data; video and the study of micro- social interaction; video as a tool to generate new insights and data. I argue that video has facilitated, enriched and expanded my understanding of migrant political action in several ways, some of which were entirely unexpected at the beginning of this research. Within the field of migration studies, video appears particularly suitable to research the terrain of politics and culture, since it provides the means to study a key social aspect that is extremely difficult to investigate in detail only with other types of methods (except perhaps ethnography): interaction. In my case, it proved a very useful complement to interviews, artefacts and archive documentation.

To highlight the potential of video does not mean to gloss over the open questions and the risks that such method brings. Using visual methods, particularly with no prior experience, presented a number of challenges, including ethical (how to respectfully engage with research participants), technical (how to properly master the video equipment, how to effectively handle video data) and more broadly methodological ones (what is the status of video data, what is the role of the researcher in the process, and so forth). While these are all real challenges, I believe they should not deter researchers from using video in migration studies, rather encourage them to keep reflecting on how video methods can advance the field. As argued by Harris (2016, p. 29), "video does not have one singular use or "right" way of functioning as a research tool, nor one context that is most appropriate, either disciplinary or in the field. Perhaps the most exciting part of considering using video as a method is its flexibility and adaptability."

the early days of the band, and then invited the rest of the band to share their thoughts before playing a few songs.

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Chapter 15

In the Eye of the Beholder? Minority Representation and the Politics of Culture



Tina Magazzini

The debate(s) on the relationship between art, activism and academia is as old as knowledge-production itself. In keeping with this volume's focus on reflexivity and representation, this contribution asks what role filmmakers, curators and artists play as knowledge producers and as knowledge-brokers when working on politicized issues such migration and/or ethnicity. This chapter looks at three European experiences that sit on the seam of curatorial practice, testimony and activism and address the (visual) narratives of minority groups. Exploring the emergence of these initiatives and drawing upon interviews with the curators and artists behind them, this chapter takes stock of ongoing debates on the complex relationship between political and artistic representation on minority groups. Adopting Mitchell's (1995) approach to representation that sees it as always being "of someone, by someone, to someone", particular attention is given to the implications of *what* kind of stories are told, for *whom* they are told, and of *who* does the storytelling.

[F]rom the moment you are born every stick and stone, every face, is white. Since you have not yet seen a mirror, you suppose you are, too. It comes as a great shock around the age of 5, 6, or 7 to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you. It comes as a great shock to see Gary Cooper killing off the Indians, and although you are rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians are you. It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and your identity has not, in its whole system of reality, evolved any place for you.

James Baldwin, *The American Dream and the American Negro*, 1965

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15.1 Introduction: On Representation(s)

The term “representation” can be used in a number of ways and contexts, but two main strands stand out in human and social sciences. One has to do with *political representation*: from traditional theories of electoral representation to feminist scholarship to ethnic and racial studies, sociologists, political scientists and social scientists more broadly have always been concerned with issues of representativeness. Whether centred on comparing substantive representation to descriptive representation (Pitkin, 1972), on debates around electoral quotas (Mansbridge, 1999), or on discussions regarding what constitutes “legitimate” political representation in democratic regimes (Przeworski et al., 1999; Brito Vieira & Runciman, 2008), political representation has to do with someone “acting” for someone else in the political arena. Hanna Pitkin’s influential *The Concept of Representation* defined it as the act of making citizens’ concerns, preferences, and opinions “present” in public policy making processes: to make the represented “present again” (Pitkin, 1967). Political representation as a concept has become, particularly in the last half a century, the cornerstone of how we think of “representative government”, responsiveness, legitimacy and accountability in modern democracies.

A second strand is that of *artistic representation*. In the arts, literature and media studies, whether in the realm of theatre, performance, poetry, cinema, painting, photography or filmmaking, a representation involves the capacity of something or someone to symbolize, to portray, or to “bring to mind by description” (Paulson, 2015, p. 237) something or someone else. C.S. Pierce defined representation in the following terms: “I confine the word *representation* to the operation of a sign or its relation to the object for the interpreter of the representation. [...] A representation is that character of a thing by virtue of which, for the production of a certain mental effect, it may stand in place of another thing. The thing having this character I term a *representamen*, the mental effect, or thought, its *interpretant*, the thing for which it stands, its *object*.” (Pierce, 1865). Similarly, W. J. T. Mitchell has referred to representation as signs used to express something else: the creation of symbols that stand for or take the place of a concept, an object or a relation (Mitchell, 1995).

What do political and artistic representation have in common, and what happens to representation when an artistic expression aims at capturing, reflecting, or expressing an identity or story (what Pierce called the *object*) that is political? When “representing” and narrating stories and experiences of minorities that have traditionally been silenced or ignored, should the artist or curator strive for some kind of political representation? And if so, how?

Stemming from these questions, this chapter offers an insight into three artistic endeavors that aim at telling the stories of minorities characterized by migration, mobility, opportunity, precarity and resilience in Europe’s contemporary cultural (and political) landscape. By delving into these portrayals of ethnic, migrant, mobile individuals, I hope to raise issues that resonate beyond the selected cases analyzed, and that help us reflect on what kind of relationship is possible and desirable between artistic and political representation.

15.2 Context and Case Studies

The issue of representation, and representativeness, of minoritized groups in the arts—particularly in visual storytelling—has become an increasingly prominent one over the past decades. The presence and role of women, and more recently of racialized actors, directors and performers, while it remains subject to constraints and discrimination that still shape the industry, is no longer a taboo (Cortés, 2000). Such developments have emerged alongside or in parallel to civil rights and feminist struggles, and in many ways mirror political claims of political recognition with the acknowledgement that a shift in the arts, media and the entertainment industry is just as urgent.

In 1975, Laura Mulvey coined the term “the male gaze” to describe how the gaze of the movie camera reflected the directors’ heterosexual male viewpoint (Mulvey, 1975). Since the 1980s, introduced by an Alison Bechdel comic strip, the Bechdel-Wallace Test—which looks at whether a movie a) has at least two women in it, who b) talk to each other, about c) something other than a man—has become a standard test to assess the gender equality of a fiction work (Garber, 2015). In contemporary Europe, stories and representations of migration and of “othered” minorities such as Roma or Muslims usually are shaped without the participation or active voices of those who are the *object* of such stories, the minorities themselves. This, in turn, fosters a de-humanized and often threatening portrayal of “others” which results in what has been termed elsewhere in this volume a “selective amnesia” (Bacon et al., Chap. 12, in this volume).

In this chapter, in order to get a sense of what kind of minority representations through art, memory and documentary filmmaking are currently taking place in Europe I chose to look at three very different initiatives, and interview the curators, filmmaker and directors directly involved in these projects about their experience.

The reason for choosing the three initiatives detailed in the next sections—and which obviously cannot by any means be representative of the rich and ever-growing cultural landscape on minority representation in contemporary Europe— is three-fold. A departing consideration is a practical one, and has to do with accessibility: these are three initiatives that I came across and followed over the years during which I was doing my PhD, which means I had some connection with the artists, the researchers or curators involved in these projects previously to interviewing them; and based on such encounters I felt they could offer a honest and rich insight into the kind of “representation work” they were involved in.¹

¹I closely followed the “making-of” of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, attending workshops, open and closed discussions, and following online forums about its inception, a process which is described in detail in the article *Cultural Institutions as a Combat Sport. Reflections on the European Roma Institute* (Magazzini, 2016). I encountered the Expatriate Archive Centre in The Hague in 2017 at the International Metropolis Conference, a network that has hosted an international conference concerning research and policy on human migration annually since 1996. Regarding the documentary “Bunkers”, it was selected among the best documentary short movies for the conference “International Migration, Integration and Social Justice in Europe”, which took

Secondly, I was interested in showing radically different means of *objects*: one experience's focus is archival work about expats; another centers on Roma cultural recognition; and a third one is an independent documentary film on asylum seekers' housing condition in Switzerland.

Finally, I wanted to look at different *processes*: at how such representations emerged from very different communities and through different means (or *representamen*). One case—the Expatriate Archive Centre—emerged as the private initiative of a group of Shell employees' wives in the 1990s, who had returned to the Netherlands after spending most of their lives abroad. Another—the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture—is the result of a long and negotiated struggle between Roma activists, artists and intellectuals with governments, private and international organizations, resulting in an institute which is co-sponsored by the Council of Europe and the Open Society Foundations. And a third experience came about through the encounter of an independent filmmaker with images circulated on the internet via an activist network, and that portrayed claustrophobic images of the places in which many asylum seekers were hosted in Geneva following the so-called “refugee crisis”.

Overall, all three projects aim to promote a better understanding of the experiences of people on the move or of ethnic minority identity in contemporary Europe, and they all deal—more or less explicitly—with the political nature of their artistic, archival and curatorial work.

15.2.1 *The Expatriate Archive Centre*

Based in The Hague since 1992, the Expatriate Archive Centre (henceforth EAC) emerged from a collection of hundreds of handwritten stories and reminiscences from around the world in different languages of Shell employees and their family members, the earliest dated 1928. At a time in which the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company was preparing to commemorate its centenary, the (informally called) “Shell Ladies Project” wanted to recognize the contributions, worth and stories of expatriate families, that eventually developed into what is currently an international archival center based in The Hague that engages with artists and academic researchers. Launched thanks to an endowment of Royal Dutch Shell, it is therefore a case of the private sector funding a conservation institute with an artistic and research vocation.

When asked about the history of the Expatriate Archives Centre, the current director explains that it started with the publication of two books in 1993 and 1996, edited by Glenda Lewin and Judy Moody-Stuart. Glenda and Judy were Shell

place in Bilbao and that I contributed to co-organize. Its selection for the conference led to the documentary being screened at the “Invisible films” festival in November 2016, to which the filmmaker was invited and held a Q&A session after the screening. The quotes cited in this chapter are not from the Q&A session, but from an interview carried out during the same dates in Bilbao for the Italian magazine WOTS.

employees' wives who found that their stories needed to be told, and heard, about what living abroad had meant for them and their families. That's why they asked colleagues of their husbands and their families to submit their contributions for their book, which was titled *Life on the move*. This first book was a big success, to the point that in 1996 they decided to publish a second book called *Life now*.

The original handwritten material, photographs and objects gathered were stored in a suitcase by Judy Moody-Stuart. When Dewey White, an American social historian, looked at these contributions she suggested that they should be archived as source material for future research, and, according to EAC's director, that was basically how the idea of the archives was born. While the initial idea was to document and acknowledge the contributions of the wives and families to the success of the Shell Company,² and it very much focused on the private archives of these families and their stories, such focus slowly shifted to include a more diverse body of work, memories and stories. 2008 was the year in which EAC became an independent foundation—changing its name to “Expatriate Archive Centre” from the original “Shell Outpost Foundation”—and its focus shifted from Shell's employees and their families to whoever is on the move. According to EAC's Director:

Since 2008, our mission is to collect and preserve the lived stories of expatriates worldwide, regardless of their employer and their employment, for future research. What makes us unique is that you can find archives of expatriates in different archives around the world, but there is no such place that only focuses on expatriates. We do not care about the nationality of who provides the material or the language in which the material is in... what we see is that because of expatriate nature, often in local or national archives there is a tendency to collect materials of people 'of importance' or people who somehow 'matter' for a reason or another because they have lived in a particular area, in a particular time, but people like expatriates fall through the cracks, it seems less obvious to justify why their stories matter. (online interview, 27 March 2019)

15.2.2 The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture

The idea of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (henceforth ERIAC) was promoted by a group of Romani activists, intellectuals and artists from different countries who got together around the idea of trying to create an institution for Romani arts and culture at the European level. Attempts at creating such an institution dated back to the 1970s, but only in the past half-decade did it gather enough momentum for an “Alliance for the European Roma Institute” to be formed. This alliance became the motor behind the initiative, leading to ERIAC being officially opened in Berlin in 2017. Supported and financed by the Open Society Foundations and the Council of Europe, it represents a rare case of a cultural institute funded directly by an international organization.

²They also tried to encourage the very few men who were accompanying their wives to share their experiences, but according to EAC's current director they were too shy or did not feel like sharing their experiences.

ERIAC's mission statement is to combat anti-gypsyism through the means of art and culture, history, commemoration, media and knowledge production—which are ERIAC's key areas of competence. According to its founders and directors, ERIAC's establishment emerged from a legacy and history of fighting for an institution that would be independent and work to safeguard and promote Romani cultural heritage, artistic and cultural creations. According to ERIAC's director, it was also paramount that such a project translated into a physical art space:

there were so many drafts for a museum, for a European space, an institution with doors and windows that does not exist exclusively on a website, on paper or in a framework strategy. ERIAC is not a concept: it is an actual institution, a legitimate space that you can walk into. (online interview, 4 September 2018)

15.2.3 *Bunkers*

BUNKERS is a 14-minutes-long documentary film that was directed by Anne-Claire Adet, a French Swiss-based filmmaker, between 2015 and 2016, at the height of sensationalist reporting about the so-called “refugee crisis”. As the filmmaker recalled on how the idea of the movie came about:

The movie was built on two encounters, one with the images, and the other with Mohammad Jadallah. I was lucky to find on the internet valuable material from the asylum-seekers collective «StopBunkers»: images filmed by asylum-seekers using their cellphones. Raw images, without any editing or directing, just the bare description of unworthy living conditions. I didn't want to shoot images myself, but I wanted to convey their look. For those who do not speak our language, the picture is the only way to convey the unspeakable. I decided to give a new life to these powerful images, in order to immerse the viewers in these bunkers, with asylum seekers through their eyes. To live the physical experience of the life underground, from the perspective of those, uprooted, who are seeking refuge and security in Europe. (Bilbao, 15 October 2016)

Over the past few years the short documentary received international recognition, has travelled across many countries and has been shown in schools, where it has been used to trigger debates and to raise awareness among students about the conditions in which some asylum seekers (typically single men, “Dublin” cases, dismissals etc.) are hosted in Switzerland. These consist of underground bunkers that were originally built as a war refuge but are not suited for a length of time above 3 weeks for anyone, and certainly is not a space for persons who are reckoning with trauma and experiences of prison and torture. Even though the Federal Supreme Court ruled that the living conditions do not violate human dignity or the right to emergency assistance according to Art. 7 and Art. 12 of the Federal Constitution, the National Commission on the Prevention of Torture concluded in a 2013 report that these military installations should be used only for short-term stays of a maximum 3 weeks. Rather than trying to document the situation firsthand by filming it, by choosing to tell the story through the asylum-seekers images and recollections, the filmmaker engaged in a lengthy and fruitful collaborative process:

I didn't ask myself for the authorization to shoot underground. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have been given the access, because all my journalist friends were denied it—officially, to preserve the intimacy of the residents. But that was not my reason not to try [to get permission to film in the bunkers where the asylum seekers are hosted]. I really wanted to show the life underground through the eyes of those living there, not to project my own look on it. It was initially a political choice, that later became an aesthetic choice. At first, I thought the fact that the images were vertical was an issue.³ Then, I took it as a great opportunity to reinforce the feeling of oppression for the viewer, narrowing the space. (Bilbao, 15 October 2016)

15.3 Representation “of”: Which Stories, and How to Tell Them

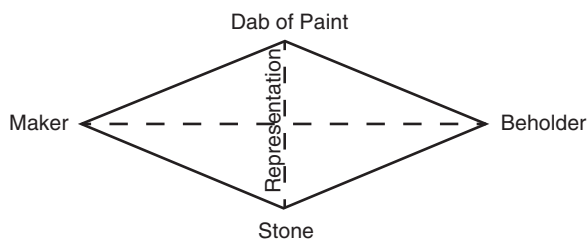
The “Representation of” is an especially complex dimension, in that it includes both the object/story being represented, as well as the means through which it is represented.

In his proposed framework of a triangular relationship between the person(s) who decide to “make” the representation, the representation itself, and the “public” or the beholder, Mitchell proposes to illustrate the example “*someone* represents a *stone* with a *dab of paint* to *someone* else” with the following scheme (Mitchell, 1995, p. 2) (Fig. 15.1):

While the connecting lines between the “Maker” and the “Beholder” can be seen as an “axis of communication”, the connecting lines between the *object* being represented (the stone) and the *representamen* (the dab of paint) is the “axis of representation”. The choice of placing this axis of representation as cross-cutting to the axis of communication aims at showing that representation is both a means of communication—the maker needs to go through it, in order to reach the beholder—but also a potential obstacle to it, “presenting the possibility of misunderstanding, error, or downright falsehood” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 2).

When asked about how they went about selecting the stories they selected, and to elaborate on the process of choosing their *object*, the “makers” of EAC, ERIAC and BUNKERS each had a unique story to tell which however invariably pointed at

Fig. 15.1 Representation by W.J.T. Mitchell (1995). In *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, p. 2. Retrieved from <http://www.credoreference.com/entry/uchicagols/representation>



³The images circulated by the collective “StopBunkers” had been filmed by an asylum seeker with his smartphone, which is why they are vertical, raw and not framed as they would have by a professional filmmaker.

the conviction of being engaged in representing something “bigger” than the specific *object*-story itself.

EAC’s director explained:

At the beginning of 2000 there was a restructuring, because part of the Shell Outpost Foundation was more focused on providing practical support to Shell families when they moved from one place to another, and that part became a section called “Global Outpost” within Shell. The Archives, instead, took shape in an independent form, with the thought behind them being that these stories are *of* Shell employees, but they are not *the property* of Shell. (online interview, 27 March 2019)

The understanding was that the pictures, objects and diaries of the Shell employees experiencing “life on the move” were shaped not so much by the employment opportunity responsible for their move in the first place, as much as by the moving itself. This, in turn, made for a collection of memories and experiences that transcend the specific national or work-related group. In 2018, for EAC’s 10th anniversary since its “emancipation” from the Outpost Foundation, the Centre engaged 10 artists to each produce a piece inspired by something from the archive collection. This resulted in *Saudade: An Intersection of Archive and Art*, a travelling exhibition that is carried around in the original suitcase used by Judy Moody-Stuart, one of EAC’s founders. As Aoife Rosenmeyer, an art critique, remarked “The *Saudade* project is a challenge to the uniformity of globalization, a celebration of the specific and an investigation of what foreignness means today. The resulting works do not define the archives they were inspired by, but inform them.” (The Expatriate Archive Centre 2018, p. 87) (Fig. 15.2).



Fig. 15.2 The suitcase. (Source: Expatriate Archive Centre)

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The deputy director of ERIAC, reflecting on the scope and content of the artistic programme and choices made by the newly founded institute, commented:

This is a Roma institute, evidently, so our mandate and our scope are predominantly focused on Roma. There are however a number of issues here: one is that for us it is really important *to show the universality of the Roma struggle*. Many of the things that we as Roma face as minorities are not unique to Roma, but are rather shared by those communities that are kept on the margins. The history and dynamics of both the status quo as well as the struggle against it, the processes of resisting and overcoming, can be very instructive to us as Roma, so looking into experiences of other minority struggles is very informative and very inspiring. (online interview, 10 July 2018)

Within this shared struggle, ERIAC's director stressed the importance of ownership over the type of cultural products and knowledge production that come out of the institute.

We want Romani and non-Romani individuals and organizations to join ERIAC, and then try to discuss together what types of knowledge, debates and topics we could or should deal with. Knowledge production is [...] critical for shaping self-crafted narratives on Roma and taking control over images and discourses about us. (online interview, 4 September 2018)

The director of BUNKERS spoke, in response to the question of why and how she decided to make a movie about asylum seekers' shelters, about the layered process of documentary filmmaking, and about how the result had emerged from a combination of direct testimony and powerful imagery:

Mohammad Jadallah, a former Sudanese activist and journalist, gave me his trust and accepted to speak out for those who cannot. He didn't film the images himself, but he spoke about them for his friends in the collective. (Bilbao, 15 October 2016)

The beginning of this process was the discovery of the video images in her email inbox one morning, through the newsletter of a group of activists who are vocal on migrants' rights in Geneva. The link of the images came with two lines saying "beware, claustrophobic content":

As I am a claustrophobic person, I of course watched... and I actually was disappointed because the images were cut where a person would appear, I had to turn my head 90° to watch them fully, and the sound was almost inexistent. I felt there would be something powerful to do with it, so I decided to go back to the source to see what was possible. It is not officially prohibited to film inside the bunkers for the residents, but they all fear that something might happen to their asylum procedure if they do. That's why the faces are blurred. Most of the images [used in the documentary film] are the one I first discovered this day. Some others have been shot later by a friend who is an asylum seeker and was staying in another bunker. [...] Those who filmed didn't want their names nor faces to appear nowhere. And it took me many months, and many liters of coffee taken with Mohammad so that he trusted me enough to let me show his face and name on camera. When he first accepted to participate in the project, he wanted his face to be blurred and his voice to be changed...! It would have been a totally different film. (Bilbao, 15 October 2016)

Issues of privacy, and trust between the maker and the object clearly play a crucial role in shaping how the stories are represented across all cases, once they are selected. In the case of EAC, previously to interviewing the center's director I had tried (unsuccessfully) to look for testimonies, images and documentation on the

Archive Centre’s website, without realizing that even though donors have to agree upon and to sign a depository agreement in order to donate their materials to EAC, this does not make such materials publicly available on the internet:

In terms of what EAC claims to do differently from other institutes that address similar topics, this has to do with both the material it collects and the approach it has to it. The type of material collected and organized through the archive software varies—people donate diaries, pictures, films, stamps and tickets— but the main goal is to preserve material for research, rather than displaying objects for a general public. The criteria for the selection of the material take into account what kind of information it provides, the history behind it, and the related intellectual and property rights issues. [...] The interesting thing is that now we really see an increase in researchers getting in touch and using the archive, and at the end of the day that is the main goal. That’s why you cannot see anything on our website, everything is private, even though we are now working on one project that will be available for the public. From the beginning there was the whole thought of collecting material for research, to give a voice to expat families. Until now the Archives are not really open for public—because of privacy reasons, and it is really focused on academic research. (online interview, 27 March 2019).

15.4 Representation “by”: Whose Voices Shape the Narrative

While interlinked to the stories that are represented (the representation “of”), a separate issue has to do with the agency of the “maker”—the persons/institute in charge of the representation in the first place (the representation “by”). While representations of migrants, refugees and minorities more broadly abound in mainstream media, it is not often that the storytellers are the minorities themselves (see also Bacon et al. Chap. 12, in this volume, p. 233–266).

This is why the issue of “whose institute” the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture is, and whose narrative and stories it engages with, is a very sensitive one (Magazzini, 2020). In the words of ERIAC’s Executive Director (Fig. 15.3):

While we will always be a minority, we must understand what being deprived of a voice and of a certain control over identity framing does, and how this directly and indirectly influences policymaking, for example. This is why we felt it was really important to have an institution explicitly by, for and about Roma. [...] ERIAC wants to offer a space where we can sit down and discuss and try to come up with assertive, evidence-based and negotiated responses to the questions that academics have been asking for centuries: what does it mean to be Roma and who is “Roma”? I think it is important that we have our own space to discuss how we can unite in the diversity we face; discuss the fact that multiculturalism is our everyday reality and how these issues affect our solidarity, ethnic identifications across countries and groups, dialects and so on. Since we have never had such spaces before, ERIAC can really make a change. This is the first time we have a space to negotiate, reinvent and also to argue: it is not that we are going to come up with one single, “true” answer, but it is important that this is a space to discuss these issues about identity and to provide the ground for plural responses. (online interview, 4 September 2018)

When asked how they identify themselves in relation to the subject of their projects, EAC’s director and BUNKERS’ director both self-identified as migrants, yet



Fig. 15.3 Source: debate “Preserving and Promoting Roma Cultural Heritage. The role of ERIAC”
© Nihad Nino Pušija

as a “different kind” of migrants compared to those whose stories they told through the archive and the documentary:

Personally, I consider myself a migrant. In June 2019 it will be 6 years that I’ve been the Director of EAC. I have been living here for many years, and consider The Hague home. [...] For an expatriate the issue of ‘where is your home’ becomes the most painful question. So I think it becomes interesting to see how expats interact with local communities, if they do, and what kind of organizational structure they lack, what they leave behind. What is interesting to see is how people perceive their host country, the longer they stay, and how does it change them or make them more ‘national’ in their traditions. What we are really interested in is what people do, and how people behave...when they know it’s not forever, when they know they will be going somewhere else. The pattern of behavior is different. How do these people perceive their own nationality, what does it do to them? (online interview, 27 March 2019)

In the case of BUNKERS, Adet explained:

I was born in France from an Italian mother who migrated in the 1960s with her working class parents, looking for better opportunity for her and her three sisters. I grew up and lived in France, but also in Mexico, Togo and now Switzerland. Regularly, I was a foreigner, a stranger. But I always felt relatively welcome. I had papers, a job, and I spoke the language. (Bilbao, 15 October 2016)

Related to the “ownership” and to the shaping of the narratives, the choices in naming, labeling, framing and presenting the material one collects is also an operation that is intimately connected to agency, and it is where some of the risks of misunderstanding or mis-presenting emerge. How does one define who an expat is?

Or who a Romani artist is? In a movie aimed at raising awareness, how does one choose a title for the representation of the Swiss state's claustrophobic oppression and discrimination employed to discourage asylum seekers from coming in the first place? In the last case, the filmmakers' choice was to opt for the title "Bunkers", which symbolize both the hostile environment experienced by asylum seekers upon arrival as well as the feeling of being "locked in" with no opportunity to reach out, to communicate, to make one's voice heard.

In the case of the Expatriate Archive Centre, the choice of the title "Expatriate Archive Centre" was a clear break from the previous explicit connection to the Shell company, and one that signaled an opening and a change of direction in terms of scope and content. Yet, the word "Expatriate" is one that easily leads to controversy. In explaining why this term was chosen and how it is interpreted, EAC's director put it this way:

Expat is a very negative and loaded word, so we start from the fact that we use our own interpretation of it. For us expatriate is someone who lives outside his or her home country *temporarily*. What we were interested in looking at when we set up the EAC was to understand the mindset of a person when the move is not permanent...if I move, but I'm not going to make home out of the new place because I know I won't stay there forever. To be an expat is really when you know that within some years you will be moving elsewhere. And how many years it doesn't really matter—so for us for example, we consider up to four years. The international student going to study abroad for a year is, to us, an expatriate. And we do look at migration and migrants as such, in the sense that if you move somewhere temporarily, but then you decide to stay, we focus on the first four years of that experience, but then for us that person becomes a migrant. (online interview, 27 March 2019)

In the case of ERIAC, as explained by its Deputy Director, despite the original name of the institute being "European Roma Institute", the arts and culture dimensions were added to the title once the scope and ambitions of the group settled on cultural production as the area of choice. The "Europeanness" of the institute was also debated:

For me, the 'Global Roma Institute' or something with similar meaning would have been the most accurate name for our institute, because I consider us a global diaspora and we have also received contributions from all around the world, not just Europe. But because of the kind and type of struggle we currently face in Europe, and also because the Council of Europe became one of the founders, the name 'ERAC', with the 'E' for European, was chosen. (online interview, 10 July 2018)

15.5 Representation "for": Culture and Knowledge for Whom?

As Mitchell points out in his *Representation* essay, the "receiver", or "beholder" of any kind of representation, has to necessarily be a person(s): "We can represent things only to people. [...] I can represent a man with stone, or a stone with a man; but it would be very odd to speak of representing either a stone or a man to a stone." (Mitchell, 1995, p. 1).

Representation, in its political as well as in the artistic realm, is deeply embedded in a set of codes and social agreements which make it meaningful and understandable to the “public”. Who this public is—or at least who the representation is created for and aimed at reaching according to its maker—can, in turn, help us make sense of the representation itself. Is any institute and documentary movie that tackle issues such as minority identity and migration engaging in political activism, even if implicitly so?

While *BUNKERS*’ images emerged—quite literally—from an activist network, its director claims not to be at ease with the documentary being labelled as an “activist film” (Fig. 15.4):

The film is not a pamphlet, but an invitation to experience the life of someone else for about 14 minutes. I’d like to go beyond the current crisis and raise the broader question of our relation to the other, the one who is foreign to us. I’m not comfortable with the ‘activist-documentary’ labeling... In a way, this looks like an activist film. But I come from an activist, or at least committed background, and the format and style of the film don’t match the criteria of classic activist film. I’m not sure I would have done the film in the same way if I had only tried to do an activist film. My purpose was more to prompt people to put themselves in the shoes of an asylum-seeker. I was already living in Geneva for 4 years, and I was surprised to hear many Swiss people considering it normal that asylum-seekers could be hosted there. Swiss people are used to these underground spaces and don’t necessarily see what’s wrong with it. I wanted to tell them that it’s not OK to live this way. And I had to show them how other people, those who are actually living there, feel about it. That’s why I define the film as a ‘sensorial immersion’. It’s a documentary, but it’s also an essay in a way, because I wanted it to be physical and sensitive more than anything, more than a classic activist film. (Bilbao, 15 October 2016)

For *ERIANC*’s directors, while they chose to stay away from identity politics—a contentious space already occupied by other Romani organizations—the choice of focusing on Romani arts and culture was seen not as a de-politicised or as an abstract way of promoting a certain kind of artistic production, but rather as one of the few



Fig. 15.4 Picture frame from the documentary *BUNKERS*, 2016. (Filmmaker: Anne-Claire Adet)

available ways for a minority to attempt to contribute to knowledge-production and shape their own narratives. In the worlds of ERIAC's Executive Director:

Culture has an important dimension of social responsibility. Culture is the only transformative field in the Romani context, because in all the other dominant discourses—such as the major ones about housing, employment, health and education—Roma are primarily contextualized as a 'problem.' It is almost impossible to maneuver in these settings when you want to mobilize any kind of empowerment or inspiration. For the time being then, culture seems to be the only field in which the Roma are contextualized more positively. Particularly when it comes to antigypsyism, culture is actually the transformative field par excellence. Indeed, when Roma finally take ownership over their own image and are able to create counter-arguments, counter-images and counter-propaganda of themselves, the transformative power of arts and culture becomes obvious for everybody. (online interview, 4 September 2018)

In the case of EAC, the "beholder"—most of those who seek access to the archives—are researchers coming from a diverse background in social and human sciences, and which may have different reasons for approaching the centre:

[t]he most obvious connection is history and cultural heritage, but we keep being surprised by different angles that people find our resources useful from different fields...we've had people from linguistic studies, we've had people studying architecture, or photography. Sometimes they're looking for inspiration, sometimes it's about sharpening or deepening their thoughts. We are now issuing a scholarship prize to Master students, to show what is going on in research in this area, and to support those who write on this. The topics are rather broad, and we really mainly want to showcase the research, because one thing is financing the research itself [as universities do]; but more attention can and should also be put into the promotion of the research that has already been written. (online interview, 27 March 2019)

In terms of bridging the work of artists with archival research, one example is the abovementioned *Saudade* project, an exhibition constituted by 10 art pieces that were commissioned for EAC's 10th anniversary.

I thought it would be interesting to work with 5 artists living in the Netherlands and 5 living abroad, people who had experience or interest in using archives to create a piece of art... it took two years for the project to be implemented, and now it's a travelling exhibition. Everything sits in a suitcase, and it can be adapted depending on the size of the place. It's our way to support artists but also to show how daily life writings can inspire people. [...] The biggest question we often times get from potential donors is 'How does my diary describing very mundane events helpful, how can it help anyone?' Performance allows us to get in touch with people who are not our usual audience or target group, and the gallery owner where the opening of the *Saudade* exhibition took place said the same regarding the kind of crowds she met and the conversations she had as a result of the project...that the people who came to her gallery to see the exhibition are not her usual clients or the usual people that she would see at an exhibition. (online interview, 27 March 2019)

Art and performance seems to be the answer of choice for ERIAC as well, despite many of its founders and supporters coming from academia:

The thing is that in the academia you see this power struggle over definitions, over the influence in policy-making, over shaping public discourses. You can see that much of it is rooted in scholarship, and there has been a growing critical mass made up of scholars of Romani background who started to speak from Roma positionality, from within it, with a Roma

voice—not necessarily claiming a more legitimate voice, but a very necessary voice that has been marginalized and has not been heard. I think that some of the “establishment”, if I may say so, in the academic field, might have misinterpreted this kind of militant voice for self-recognition and self-determination as an attack, instead of as a way of self-emancipating. It is in the field of scholarship that you can see tensions along ethnic lines most clearly, and this is also where most tensions came from, because when you look at other circles, such as Roma activism for example, or if you look at the arts and culture scene, ERIAC has been very much welcomed and supported by both Roma and non-Roma. (online interview, 10 July 2018)

15.6 The Political Responsibility of Arts and Culture

Migration and ethnic minorities are a topic of inquiry that have in recent times received a great deal of media coverage and of political attention; an attention which has been often polarizing and has made an instrumental and/or selective usage of available data (Rigo, 2018). Against this background, there is a general sense that it is important and indeed urgent to move beyond traditional ways of communicating, if not doing, research on migration and ethnicity. The employment of images and artistic expressions as tools for knowledge-production, awareness-raising and advocacy is certainly not new, nor is looking at what kind of spaces, realities and opportunities for collaboration and exchange exist between scholars and the visual, art and cultural production world. Cultural production is increasingly being recognized as a powerful tool—more than printed words alone—in influencing perceptions and attitudes on migration and minorities (see Desille, this volume; Verstappen, this volume), yet the role of artistic representation in contributing to knowledge-production on minorities remains undertheorized and controversial. Experimental contemporary experiences on migrants’ and minorities’ realities provide a particularly rich opportunity to explore how story-telling on and by traditionally silenced groups can become more “public” and accessible through cultural institutes—or, vice versa, how artistic and archival experience can inform research.

“Representation” in cultural production, as in politics, is the way in which aspects of society, such as gender, age or ethnicity, are presented to audiences. How are the three selected experiences of “representations” different from more traditional cultural institutes or platforms that address migration and ethnic identities? By looking at the cases of the Expatriate Archive Centre, the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture and the movie *BUNKERS*, what emerge is that they are concerned with using cultural, testimonial or/and archival work as a tool to prevent the logics of forgetting, as spaces to preserve, to reflect upon and to project identities. Since the “object” of narration is shaped by individual voices who choose to salvage and store the stories that reflect other processes, the agency of the people whose experiences inform such spaces tends to be greater than those offered by quantitative analysis or datasets that focus on migration flows (such as IOM’s Migration Data Portal). Despite the awareness of the uniqueness and individuality of the stories being represented in a collection of personal diaries, in an art

exhibition or through the footage of a specific asylum centre, what artistic representation allows for—possibly more successfully than political representation—is conveying the universality of the human experience. In analyzing how the selected case studies narrate minority histories, memories and heritage, what emerges is that one of the main drivers for the projects is that of using representation as a tool for empathy.

The soundtrack of the documentary *BUNKERS* is a good example of this: it is aimed at recreating the oppressive feeling of those who experienced those living conditions, and it does exactly that.

The soundtrack is made from real bunkers noise only. [...] I wanted the sound to be as realistic as possible at the beginning (we used the original sound from the smartphones) and more and more oppressive. The idea was to experience the life in the bunker as an asylum-seeker: you arrive there without really knowing where you are. You are a bit disoriented; you do not receive much information on how long you're going to stay. And then, the nightmare starts... You are anxious, you don't have intimacy, you can't sleep, you feel sick, you are sick... until the rebellion. (Bilbao, 15 October 2016)

Against the current European crisis we are witnessing—which is not a refugee crisis, but rather a humanitarian and political one— by refusing to enter the comparative minefield of what constitutes the “lowest threshold” of treatment for underprivileged minorities, art curators and filmmakers might indeed prove more successful than academic scholarship in producing emphatic and impactful knowledge on politicized topics. As put by *BUNKERS*' director:

Some people consider that living underground is better than in the outdoors camps in Paris, Calais, or in the hot spots in Puglia or Greece. I don't want to enter this argument. As Foucault once stated, 'L'inacceptable n'est pas relatif'. (Bilbao, 15 October 2016)

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Chapter 16

The Researcher's Nightworkshop: A Methodology of Bodily and Cyber- Ethnographic Representations in Migration Studies



Julius-Cezar MacQuarie

16.1 Introduction

Migrants working the night shift (MWNS) have been invisible to the public eye for far too long. The failure to acknowledge the crucial role played by migrants working in the evening and night-time economy of developed societies is difficult to tackle with classical research tools alone. This chapter offers to novice and seasoned migration scholars a threefold methodological strategy to immerse, inhabit and to bring out of the dark a nocturnal landscape that has been invisible to diurnal people. The researcher's nightworkshop's innovative approach provides migration scholars with visual-analytical tools to capture the hidden experiences of MWNS. Theoretically, this chapter considers the broad aspects of representation (*reel*) and reality (*real*) of migrants in the public space and in migration scholarship. Night workers, the invisible people of the nocturnal city remain so to scholars, due to the impracticalities of doing nocturnal research (MacQuarie, 2019a). Empirically, therefore, the researcher's nightworkshop's strategy offers a solution to the puzzle of "invisibility" of night shift workers. But it also reckons with the fact that to make visible the working lives in the realm of the night is a daunting task for scholars. Readers should interpret the notion of *visibilisation* with caution, using it as a visual metaphor to expose the factors that alter the night-shift workers' precarious working conditions. This challenge is addressed here, through efforts that bridge the contingent of night workers, their minds and bodies that share the precarious landscape of nightwork with the researcher – alert and awake via the senses and suffering turned into skills.

This night-vision ethnography has significant applicability in larger studies, and in unchartered contexts, which I explain throughout the chapter. More broadly, this

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empirical approach tells of migration stories bottom-up. Therefore, it helps researchers to understand the power of visual storytelling by migrants travelling to work in the night, and how they see day people in developed societies, responding (or not) to their yearnings for sociability, lack of time due to long unsociable shift hours, limited access to education, and denied rights to decent working conditions. More narrowly, it tells us why it matters to make visible the societal challenges in great part faced (not caused) by migrant workers. It matters because a methodology that includes visual methods will enable “invisible” groups of marginalised migrants to gain space in the media, public and political debates on migrant affairs, which are scarce and skewed.

This chapter stems from my doctoral fieldwork on the invisible migrants working all night in London’s largest fruit and vegetable market, the New Spitalfields. The nocturnal landscape that I discovered soaked into my body’s fibres and sensorial experiences, six nights per week, during night shifts lasting from 10 to 16 h, over the course of 8 months. Besides the advantages of using audio-visual tools in my research, I immersed in the invisible lives of manual labourers and relied on corporeal methods to experience night work – *veni, vidi, vici*. In the main body, I describe and evaluate the nightworkshop methodology in the “flesh and blood” sociological fashion that has allowed me to enter an unknown, invisible world. The last section consists of a *trilogy*, and tackles the triangular aspects concerning night work: invisibility in *Invisible Lives* (IL); nocturnal work and day sleep in *Nocturnal Lives* (NL), and sleeplessness and homelessness in the *Nightshift Spitalfields* (NS). The three short films were shot in London, co-produced with two filmmakers and one co-participant, and subsequently used as research methods and communication tools to raise awareness of migrants’ precarious lives, their specific needs and to make them visible to the critical public. Each film addresses a different milestone in my understanding of visual methodologies: the first film, IL, allowed me to explore the role of co-operation between researchers and filmmakers; the second, NL, my approach to filmmaking while researching the world of night work; and the third, NS, the transition from the researcher’s body and voice to the migrant protagonist who films and makes visible his own experience through the medium of the camera. In the discussion section, however, I discuss the gains (e.g. new representations), limitations and difficulties that I encountered while doing nocturnal ethnography and opportunities that this approach has created for me (e.g. establishing contacts, dissemination and further research). I conclude with reflections on the quest that I took to bridge the gap in the representations. I do so by putting migrants first, i.e. migrants must tell their own experience to mixed audiences.

The visual ethnographic outcome is three-fold. First, it aims to restore lacunas in social science by bridging bodily knowledge with mind constructs, broadly, and to include visual methods in migration research, specifically (Wacquant, 2015). Second, its visual focus is on the ways migrant night workers are systematically invisibilised. Third, it proposes a nocturnal, visual ethnography aimed at capturing the conditions that deny MWNS’ presence and participation in the 24/7 societies. In other words, it brings out of the dark night workers and their specific needs as

manual labourers playing crucial roles in the “strategic maintenance domain” in global cities (Aneesh, 2017), which I introduce succinctly next.

16.2 Invisible Migrants Travelling for Work

Many wo/men, travelling in the dark for work are low skilled MWNS in precarious work sectors, like food-processing, street cleaning or fruit and vegetable markets. Research shows that high-income countries rely on the migrant workforce to fill low-skilled positions that locals do not accept (Ruhs & Bridget, 2010). Against the backdrop of emerging economic and political restructuring in Europe, in a time of global expansionism, masses of citizens live in poverty and travel for work in response to the increasing inequality within the European Union (Kaneff & Pine, 2011). The trend is now acknowledged among migration scholars as being caused by “gendered gaps in transnational social rights” (Ezzeddine, 2014; Lutz, 2011; Uhde, 2016). Besides, 7.1 M foreign-born were unemployed in 2010/11 and resided in the OECD regions.¹ More than half of today's migrants live in only ten countries (OECD, 2013, p. 2), and the numbers of migrants continue to reach historic highs (nearing 250 M, OECD, 2018). Evidence shows that the migrant segment working on the UK labour market has increased considerably from 2.9 M (in 1993) to nearly 7 M in 2015 (Rienzo, 2016b). *Migrant Observatory* produces regular updates on the characteristics of foreign-born workers in the UK labour market. In 2015, it reported that the migrant workers were divided between 36% working as employees and 48% as self-employed and all lived in London, *the* global city in Europe (Rienzo, 2016b, p. 2).

London is open for low-skilled migrants to work on 24/7 rhythms. The night-time economies of 24/7 cities depend on and demand manual workers (Rienzo, 2016a, 2016b; Ruhs & Bridget, 2010). Thus, a global city absorbs a significant proportion of migrants who live, work, and become part of the production processes (Sassen interviewed by Aneesh, 2017). Their strategic positioning ensures that “temporal requirements of the 1 percent” are met (Sharma, 2014, p. 11); i.e. the chief executives and wealth managers who cannot afford the slightest delay in their business schedules are transported by precarious minicab drivers and their lunches prepared by precarious migrant catering staff working all night. Yet, these people are invisible to the mainstream (day) society due to the nature of night work activities.

Furthermore, loaders, forklift drivers, café servers and salesmen are migrants working in London's night markets (e.g. New Spitalfields, New Covent Garden) to

¹The OECD (2013) World Migration in Figures reports the average unemployment rate of 11.6% in the OECD. In 2013, the United States (US) was at the top of the OECD list of immigration countries. In Europe, only the Russian Federation (11 M) overtakes other receiving countries like Germany (9.8 M), the UK (7.8 M), France (7.5 M), and Spain (6.5 M); despite the economic downturn, millions of migrants flow across national territories to settle in OECD countries.

maintain Londoners' incessant appetite for ready-made and take away food. Migrants travel for work to meet the "need for cheap labour in mature economies" (King, 2012, p. 4). Yet, they are depicted as a threat for driving down locals' wages or are accused of welfare benefit tourism. Mannik (2012, p. 262) points at the "dehumanizing and dehistoricising" characteristics of today's representation of immigrants in the media, which has been noted previously by other scholars (Malkki, 1997; Nyers, 2006). Scholars and artists have been countering media representations of immigrants for some decades already. Among other key works, Berger and Mohr's (1975/2010) collection of photographs, poems, figures, and facts (many out of date now) depicts a stultifying portrait of a migrant's journey to work abroad.

Nevertheless, perhaps there is more to it than political interest alone – we are living in an era of non-inclusiveness of migrants in Europe. Furthermore, the gap between misrepresentations of migrants (*reel*) and that of reality (*real*) is likely to widen, especially in the context Brexit² openly supported by the unelected Prime Minister, Boris Johnsons, in October 2019. An example of the rhetoric that misrepresents migrants and refugees is that where they are portrayed as not being in crisis (and fleeing their own countries for it), but that they are contributing to a crisis in the countries where they arrive or pass through (Nyers, 2006). Some of the common stereotypes in the Londoners' imaginaries could portray someone standing on the street corner or the underground exit as the generic Eastern European man; or the older mother wearing a scarf as the Roma woman; or images with Romanian gypsy beggars have become common place. But, why don't we see past the façades? Who are the people behind the stereotypes and what are their lives like in the UK? How can one narrow this gap? I will attempt to narrow the reel—to—real gap by using the "eyes of the skin" as envisioned by Juhani Pallasmaa (2005) to show how I embodied knowledge about people-on-the-move by entering the world that night workers inhabit. Other contributors (Gnes and Magazzini, Chaps. 14 and 15, in this volume) offer ways and methods to challenge representations of migrants and minorities. This chapter continues in this spirit, with lens turned towards my migratory experience, which has shaped my approach to night work studies in migration. I also draw from reflections on the lessons I learnt while I was a migrant worker in Turkey.

²As of 1 January 2021, the new point-based immigration system (EU Withdrawal Bill, 2020) prevents migrants from accessing the UK labour market unless reaching the £25,600.00 general salary threshold. Brexit (a portmanteau of "British" and "exit") is the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU). Following a referendum held on 23 June 2016 in which 51.9 percent of those voting supported leaving the EU, the Government invoked Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, starting a two-year process which was due to conclude with the UK's exit on 29 March 2019. That deadline has since been extended to 31 October 2019. More detailed information on the withdrawal agreement and political declaration on the future relationship between the UK and the EU is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uks-points-based-immigration-system-policy-statement/the-uks-points-based-immigration-system-policy-statement> Published 19 February 2020. Accessed 31 May 2020.

16.3 Methodology

16.3.1 *Reflections on my Migratory Experience*

My migrant worker experience began in Turkey in the late 1990s. Back then, I had the social determination, but no theoretical weaponry required for an anthropologically driven experience. In Wacquant's (2015, p. 1) words, I was neither empirically nor theoretically armed to "reap the rewards". Before, I only learnt to "perform precarity" as the native co-workers (Glick Schiller, 2016). Move the point of focus to London and fast forward 14 years. I began researching about Romanian migrants working in London's night-time economy under Ger Duijzings, when we were both associated with UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies. I have since continued to immerse in the lives of workers whose languages I could speak, and atypical minds I understood (mostly Romanian, Turkish and Bulgarians). That confirms my *bona fides* – I have become an anthropologist by doing. In short, it shows how my own migratory experience has shaped my interests in migration-related topics, how I do my research (hanging out and doing stuff), while schmoozing with everyone to create contacts through fieldwork by participant observation, but it does not explain the visual dimension of my methodology. Here I am now, writing about how my auto-ethnography approach was born to offer a better understanding of the role that researchers, ethnographic filmmakers and documentarists have in portraying *reel* lives beyond dehumanising the "villain" and welcoming the "hero", and as close as possible to the *real* problems that migrant labourers face. Meanwhile, I introduce the guide to a researcher's *nightworkshop* and within the same section I explain how film became a part of my methods portfolio.

16.3.2 *Nightworkshop Methodology: Researching All Night*

The following methodological guide to visual storytelling in migration consists of bodily ethnography to research about MWNS; cyber tools to measure the sensorial experiences in order to present it visually via infographics, photo montage, and films on night workers. Here, *visual* means: representations of night work/–ers in the public eye; cyber-ethnography is used for visualising the findings with infographics, photo montage and film to portray migrant lives as human experiences in the conditions where they exist. The *nightworkshop* methodology communicates findings to mixed audiences, including academic reporting, the specific characteristics that are currently missing from scholarship on night-time economy (Roberts, 2004). From collection to dissemination, the *nightworkshop* research design includes empirical strategies and tools needed to study night work within the field of migration. Inherent in this design, is a set of core components needed to make visible night-to-night issues experienced by "invisible" MWNS. The core components include: *night walking* (Beaumont, 2015); *observing and schmoozing*

(Driessen & Jansen, 2013); *recording audio-visual interviews; bodily notetaking* (MacQuarie, 2019b; Strathern Stratham, 1996; Wacquant, 2004, 2015); *projecting short-films and podcasting*. Following my doctoral studies, I developed the last three components, which I discuss here in depth to connect space and time to corporeality of researching at night. These components are grouped in four distinct stages: (1) Review and explore; (2) Research by night; (3) Cultural interpretation; and (4) Provide a framework. Most relevant here are: stage 1 – a classical approach in research, which arms the researcher with mind constructs prior to entering fieldwork. Stage 1 may involve, for example, reviewing migration literature informed by gender studies to understand cultural sensitivities, i.e. differences and similarities in the experiences between fe/male migrant workers in terms of the depth of the precariousness impacting on bodily, emotional and intellectual functions of MWNS.

At stage 2, researchers bridge the visual with the sensorial in order to carefully acknowledge the differential experience of the night shift and the *real(-ism)* of a migrant's visual story. At this stage, a researcher-by-night will be using three components: the researcher's body via immersive ethnography, a form of participant observation that registers sensorial experiences of the researchers body at night, audio-visual recordings, cyber-ethnography that quantifies physical effort, and physiological changes due to physical effort that the investigator encounters while researching all night (e.g. heart rate, distance by number of steps). This kind of immersive ethnography is inspired by "carnal sociology" (Bispo & Gherardi, 2019; Wacquant, 2015).

Migrants become part of the process, and the very protagonists who give us insights into their own lives – as migrants, research co-participants and co-filmmakers where applicable. They raise awareness of their own predicament or give us, migration researchers, the best possible answer to how things work and to "human experience" (Engelke, 2019, p. 35). Namely, the *third stage* is the cultural interpretation mode in anthropology. This mode contributes, for example, to the understanding of the depths of precariousness due to denial of decent work right to night workers. When we connect visual instrumentation of text analysis with representational acuity in a self-critical manner, we (researchers) begin to see that our "terms of analysis, understanding and judgement are not universal and cannot be taken for granted" (Engelke, 2019, p. 16). Moreover, researchers become more attuned to differentiating between the misrepresentation of migrants' lives portrayed by the media (*reel*), and the reality that constrain them to remain hidden (*real*).

Combined, this set of tools specific to collecting data at night about migrant workers aids researchers to learn about advantages of co-participation in migration filmmaking; and with the respondents' input to produce *visual projections* of the everyday lives and every night issues faced by MWNS, as Piemontese and Augustová (Chaps. 10 and 11, in this volume) found with their respondent generated visuals, and who advocate for the participatory research methods. It has been applied and tested by visual sociologists (Martiniello, 2017) encouraging us to use visual methods in migration when discussing, for example, the racialised and ethicised migrant groups, as shown in the case of Albanians on a boat on its way to Italy in

the beginning of the 1990s. I apply these studies when I objectify my bodily, sensorial experiences through visuals. I join scholars proposing that migration researchers immerse themselves in the object of study through embodiment, lived sensorial experience, and to visually objectify their bodily experiences. Co-participation is as essential in heightening the sensibility of migrant workers' human condition, currently portrayed as heroes and villains. Moreover, it marginalises the current dichotomist view and reduces the gap between what is portrayed on screen (*reel*) and the *real* experiences of migrants.

16.3.3 *Bodily Notetaking: Gathering Sensorial Knowledge*

The *nightworkshop* methodology emphasises the researcher's sensorial experience captured through her/his body and coined by Bourdieu (1977/2000) as *embodied* knowledge. Ethnographers' bodies are like boxers' bodily capital. From a methodological standpoint, the bodily capital is translated into the *stamina* to withstand the tiredness during nights of walking, observing, small talk with strangers, or interviewing and recording observations. Ethnographers applying themselves (body and soul, matter and spirit) to research need constant surveillance of their bodily capital and manage the responses as described earlier. The ethnographer's body becomes her/his "stock-in-trade" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 129). Nocturnal activity "presupposes a rigorous management of the body" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 128) as well as of the senses, because prize fighters, martial artists or ethnographers have a limited bodily capital for labour. That leads to "practical sense, a sense of corporeal thrift acquired gradually through long-term contact" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 127). On the one hand, s/he needs to last in the fight as long as possible so that the night shift work (or another field for that matter) is embedded in the set of dispositions called *habitus*. On the other, the ethnographers' *habitus* embedded into one's bodily, mental and emotional structures becomes an epistemological tool to construct and produce bodily knowledge, a kind of "practical sense ... that orients choice" (Wacquant, 2004, p. 128). The ethnographer's "concrete science" gives her/him a *feel* for the *field*, between "incorporated history and objectified history" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66).

Ethnographers are crafts persons who make things (write ethnographies) that apply to social life; they embody a portion of the social, nocturnal landscape and through various presentations such as, editing material, the act of writing, they compile the stories of the world they study. I incorporated the subjectivities of my night co-workers, the sufferings, the gains and losses of sleepless hours and endless night shifts. I, too, internalised a set of skills (capital) to carry out nocturnal fieldwork. My research experience therefore is unique in that it enables me to represent differently the issues experienced by my migrant co-workers. Besides, the intuitive knowledge accumulated in the ethnographer's body is as concrete as physical matter is described by Pink (2006) in her multi-sensorial ethnographic manner. Strikingly, Nikielska-Sekula (Chap. 2, in this volume) articulates in her

chapter how photography grounds the photographer's positionality through her senses that connects the researcher to her immediate, immersive experience. As she smells (Turkish scents of food or male fragrances in her Norwegian neighbourhoods), touches, and feels, she cannot evade a pre-built-in positionality. But the ethnographer needs long hours of constant practice (e.g. long-term fieldwork), at regular intervals if one wishes her/his body to be the epistemological tool that one takes out as one sees fit. However, in the current climate of academic research where *blitz* fieldwork is preferred due to lack of funding, very few will have the privilege to spend a considerable amount of time to accumulate such embodied knowledge. This limitation needs consideration; an ethnographer, especially if an apprentice in the early stage of building her/his bodily capital through bodily labour while working in the field of inquiry, needs to adapt to the nocturnal rhythms, by giving up both day sleep and socialising with diurnals in the evenings. The ethnographer should neither ignore her/his bodily limitations, nor attempt to exceed them. Once unembedded from fieldwork, researchers benefit from the wealth of reflection on their immersive experience and by co-reflecting with peers when presenting findings s/he re-assesses her/his positionality as well as the privilege of being above the "survival" level that co-workers continue nightly.

16.4 Research-Based Short-Film in Migration Studies

The visual within the portfolio of the *nightworkshop* methodology contributes to the stream of participatory visual research in line with the movement MoVE (method:visual:explore) project that explores ways of engaging in research outside the classical approach to public dissemination beyond the conference or class room (Oliveira, 2016). MoVE raises awareness of the public, its negative perception and treatment of migrant sex workers, for example, as an agency-less and apolitical group (Fox, 2013). In this vein, I engaged my respondents in the photoshoot³ event and made space for their voices to explain how they live outside of mainstream societies. The broader theoretical advantage in using visual aids is to enrich the portfolio of methods to capture most pressing issues for European societies (Fig. 16.1).

Moreover, the short video-vignettes describe how night shifts into day in synco-pated tempos; and it captured both order and disorder in motion, the friction and consumption, as well as stillness and the expectancy that products were sold by the

³Figure 16.1 shows that during the photography shoot I involved my co-workers in the project. I explained what my aims were with the material and the purpose behind taking photos and video. Having obtained permission prior to the photo shoot from the Corporation of London, I collected material for the digital repository and put it to use for visual objectification of the bodies at work, and post fieldwork for presentations mixed audiences (dissemination at conferences and methods classes at university and as podcast material). Author's outputs are available in various formats as green access: <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2>; as complementary tools to this chapter, the author has released a new podcast series (2019–20) in which video-logs are used to objectify the corporeality of researching the graveyard shift. The podcast series are available at: http://bit.ly/nwp_srs Accessed 31.05.2020.

Fig. 16.1 I am showing the camera/photos to my co-workers



end of the night shift. Video logs (recorded on a mobile device) serve as self-portraits that capture impressions overlooked by a researcher due to tiredness. The video logs are 1–3 min long and show my first impressions in the field, from emotional states to physical challenges to work all night, which became part of the script in the NS. Another method I used for recording field data involved digital or cyber-ethnography.

16.5 Cyber-Ethnography: Tracking Space and Time to Learn about Bodily Knowledge

Learning and knowing the world through bodily activities has gained terrain among sociologists (Bourdieu, 2000; Wacquant, 2015), successfully applied in anthropology and branches of pedagogy by Pink (2015) and Fors, Pink, Berg, O'Dell, 2020; Vaike et al. (2020). Here, I employ the theme “sensoriality self-tracking” (Fors, Bäckström, & Pink, 2013, p. 29), as a term that encompasses data gathering techniques and tools that aid ethnographers from data collection to visualisation. Self-tracking my

own movements helped me learn about the embodied, unspoken and sensorial experiences of night workers while working aside co-workers. I used self-tracking tools, such as pedometers, to measure walking distances, thus make visible my corporeal intensity during physical labour and make it meaningful for workers so they “shape everyday situations” (Fors et al., 2013, p. 29).

The resulting data, in the case of my doctoral research, from a pedometer (e.g. *Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™*) was used in measuring space-time intensification of labour that I was subject of together with my co-workers. Combined, data collected by the pedometer complemented and supported the text interpretations and visual analysis. In short, it objectifies the embodiment of researcher’s effort by giving accurate spatial-temporal dimensions used for data visualisation (pedagogical purposes), as well as visualise and verbalise learning based on this novel approach to self-tracking physical activity for the purpose of improving health concerns and preventing precariousness to invade the workers’ bodies beyond recovery. *Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™* is a *Walking, Weight Loss & Health* application (app)⁴ available for smart phones and watches. This application tracks every step 24/7. It recommends 10,000 steps for the average daily walker. It collates data based on step length, height, weight, blood pressure and pulse entered by the user, and produces charts, i.e. it quantifies the researcher’s bodily labour, which can be interpreted as either valorising or depreciating bodily capital (e.g. building stamina) through reduced sleep and weight loss caused by long walking distances⁵ (see Figs. 16.2 on the left and 3a, upper left left). The descriptive statistics show a cumulus of physiological stages and changes that I associated with exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and mood swings. Most of which, I experienced as I exited the field (see Figs. 16.3 a–d).⁶ The descriptive categories have been converted and show: – level of *activity* of the user during a set time and/or during the day; – *distance* chart

⁴*Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™* Application available for Apple iOS devices. [Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker 4+ Walking, Weight Loss & Health](#) Accessed: 27.02.2020.

⁵Figure 16.3. It shows the number of steps converted to kilometres and accumulated by foot during the 11 months of fieldwork. The 2310 km are an equivalent of the distance between New York and Lafayette in the United States or nearly the same as between London, UK and Sibiu, Romania.

⁶Figures 16.3a: The lowest weight was registered in June 2015 with a slight increase during mid-June when I took 1 week off to fulfil INTEGRIM project duties. Figure 16.3b (above right): I regained weight when the activity rhythms and intensity decreased, indicating that bodily labour affects weight gain/loss. Caution is needed to read the indicators’ values (BMI/SBMI) as they offer different range values. Source: Author <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2>

Figure 16.3c (above right): Descriptive data shows that as the activity levels (loading equates with stepping); thus distances, increase, day sleep hours decrease. This is indicative of the negative correlation between high activity levels that impact on reducing day sleep time over a protracted period. Source: Author <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2> Figure 16.3d: (Left) BMI* According to the World Health Organization, BMI is based on “normal weight” class (good); (Right) SMBI** Smart Body Mass Index’s represents a health-risk system weight-class definition. However, for an ethnographer to manage his bodily capital based solely on S/BMI indicators is not sufficient. Combined they may aid awareness of wellbeing in the field. Sources: Kromeyer-Hauschild K, Wabitsch M, Kunze D et al. *MonatsschrKinderheilkd* 2001, 149:807; The Global BMI Mortality Collaboration, *Lancet* 2016; 388:776–86 (adults 40–80 years).

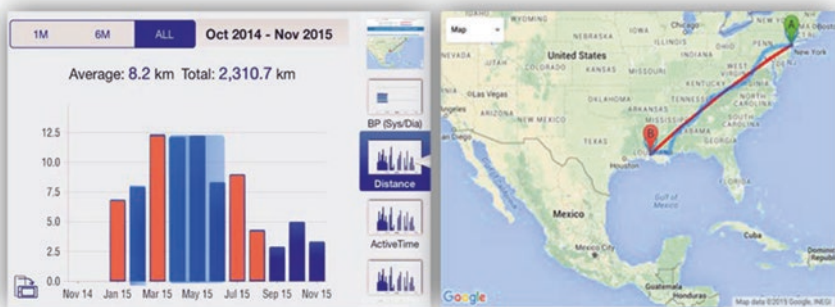


Figure SEQ Figure 1* ARABIC 2 left: average distance per night over 11 months non-/participant observation; right: total distance of 2,310 Km covered during the fieldwork period. Source: Google

Fig. 16.2 Number of steps have been converted in kilometres by the Pacer Pedometer app. The distance that I covered by-foot during night shifts over the 11 months of fieldwork, as participant/observer sums up to 2,310km - the equivalent of the distance between New York and Lafayette in the United States or nearly the same as between London, UK and Sibiu, Romania

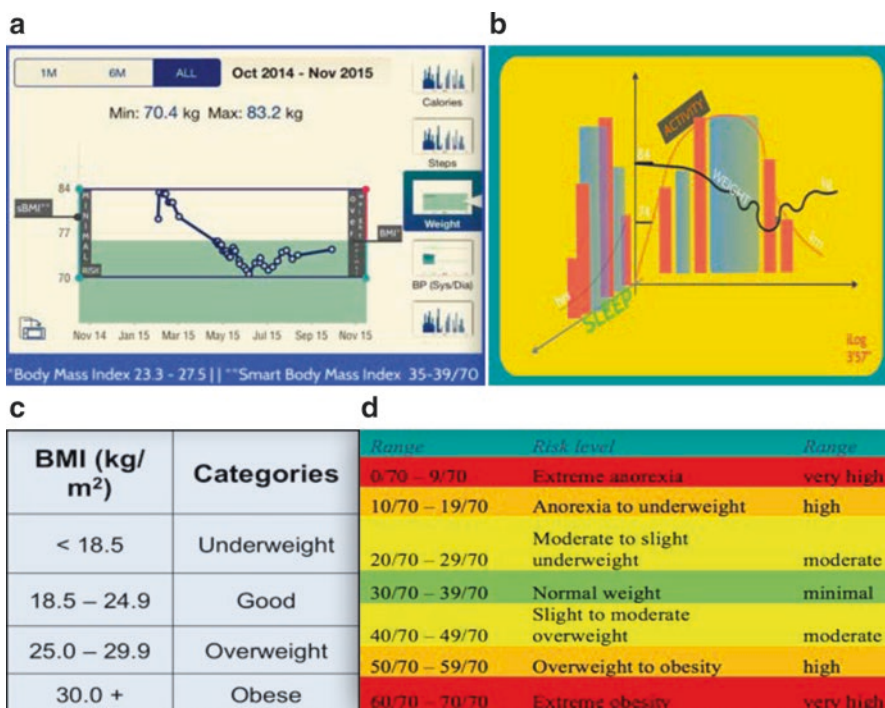


Figure SEQ Figure 3a. Weight fluctuations. Source: Author <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2>; Figure 3b. Please see footnote for interpretation of data correlation. Figure 3c and 3d: Left (c): BMI*; Right (d): SMBI** values and risk levels.

Fig. 16.3 (a) Weight fluctuations. Source: Author <http://bit.ly/blckbstr2>; (b) Please see footnote for interpretation of data correlation. (c and d) Left (c): BMI*; Right (d): SMBI** values and risk levels

compiled data based on the number of *steps* and converted into kilometres/miles; – *calories*: burnt during exercise; – *weight* fluctuation and blood pressure (Systolic/Diastolic) are optional features in the app – I updated mine weekly at the local chemist. However, further research could tackle one limitation of the present method, using more performant applications than *Pacer Pedometer & Step Tracker™*, and record the weight that night workers carry on their bodies as they walk throughout the shift, while engaged in picking-up, moving, placing and replacing crates or sacks of packed produce. Thus, the bodily labour intensity could not be captured by the *cyber notes* alone with this application. However, I tested the data for validity and reliability through triangulation of the combined methods: field notes, respondents’ accounts, photography and film, and it confirmed that fluctuations in weight and sleep patterns disruptions were not so dissimilar across the board. However, some workers continued to have disrupted night sleep while their day sleeping pattern was somewhat regulated. I lost weight from 83.2 kg to 70.4 kg during the 8 months of travail. My weight only increased from the month of September as I stopped working the night shift. The next section discusses three film projects. The three projects represent different approaches to make visible night workers’ confrontations with bodily labour and its challenges due to lack of sleep and busy nightshifts.

16.6 A Trilogy: Invisible, Nocturnal and Sleepless Lives of Migrant Night Workers

Since *Nanook of the North*, directed by Robert Flaherty in 1922, the first documentary on the “migration of a group of people (Inuit Eskimos) far removed from our industrial civilisation” ethnographic films have changed (Glynne, 2012, Location 4147). Both anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking have changed; they shifted from the “exotic” to the studies of the urban myths (Barbash & Taylor, 1997, p. 5). They engage with the urban myths, traditions and conventions with an anthropological gaze and film lens turned onto their own societies to show that their own customs are as curious or peculiar as anyone else’s away from home. An example of documentary realism in urban settings comes from filmmaker Agnes Varda’s, in her 1954 debut with *La Pointe Courte*, before the French New Wave was established (Ince, 2013; Vincendeau, 2010, 2009). Agnes Varda (1929–2019) was a “sensitive realist” (Beylie, 1962, p. 26; cited by Ince, 2013, p. 609) who had “a much more novelistic conception of creation” (Mandy, 2000, p. 71) with an experimentalist sensibility and saw life in its raw state (Raynaud, 1963). In a Vardarian fashion, in this trilogy, all but one are non-professional migrant actors. All three short-films are research-based documentaries.⁷

⁷At the time of writing this chapter, the Sleepless Bat entered the post-production phase.

The trilogy consists of three short films, *Invisible Lives*, *Nocturnal Lives* and the *Nightshift Spitalfields*. This visual ethnography is about “other workers”, MWNS in London. Each film marks a different time (politically – before and after EU transitional controls (2014), before and after the Brexit referendum (2016)); different research stages and skills levels of the researcher/filmmaker (before, during and after my doctoral studies), and a different focus (four Romanian migrant night workers in London (IL); the researcher and three migrant co-workers (NL); and one Bulgarian-Turkish co-worker and his family (NS)).

The aspects highlighted in these short films, invisibility, nocturnal vs. diurnal work, and sleepless are as important as the period in which they have been shot – times charged with immigration debates in British politics and media portrayals of self-employed Romanian and Bulgarian (A2) migrant workers as health tourists and benefit frauds, in the UK specifically, and across Europe. *Invisible Lives* was shot in 2013, the year before the right to *freedom of movement of workers* from A2 countries came into force in all the 28 EU member states. *Nocturnal Lives* was completed in 2015 – after transitional controls and before the Brexit referendum in 2016. The *Nightshift Spitalfields* was shot mostly during 2015, the year I worked together with Ali, the protagonist; and during two brief visits to the UK in 2017 and 2019. In each film, nonetheless, workers experience a shortage of rights to decent work. Each film will be discussed in turn.

16.6.1 Invisible Lives: Romanian Night Workers in London (2013, UK)⁸

This is the brainchild of an anthropologist and a cinematographer, Tim Marrinnan. Tim was keen to capture nocturnal rhythms of London on camera. I was interested in the city's political economy as well as the evening and night-time economy. Our departure points and training were distinctive (a novice anthropologist and a junior filmmaker), but we both wanted to capture something of a similar kind. After receiving a small grant from RCC, our project zoomed onto the invisible lives of four Romanian night workers in London's night-time economy. The protagonists are four Romanian migrants working in London's construction, hospitality, sex industry and food chain supply and distribution areas – four important industries that sustain the evening and night-time economy expansion. All four spent 1–2 years in London since their arrival. Three participants did not wish to appear in front of the camera to protect their identity (though Romania entered the EU in 2007, work restrictions for Romanian migrants were in place). Through narration-image combined, IL captures important issues debated in various disciplines and study areas – migration, sleep, precarity and criminal justice issues. The scenes tap into

⁸ *Invisible Lives* won the 2013 RoundTable Project awarded by Ratiu Family Foundation/Romanian Cultural Centre (RCC) in London.

some of the protagonists' difficulties of living at the margin of a rapidly changing society demanding their manual labour while denying their rights to decent working conditions, safety, and rights to healthcare, social support and until 2014 the full rights to work.⁹ The film does so without commentary and analysis. However, *IL* neither achieved making their faces visible, nor did it fail to bring to light the issues of marginalisation that migrants in global cities face. Inseparable from this kind of life is the long commuting – a reality that cannot be ignored by locals and migrants alike. But, the armies of workers travelling at night to work the night shift are mostly manual labourers lacking skills that would afford them access to social mobility. On the one hand, casual travellers by night occasionally lack safety in London. On the other, sex workers, at-street, vulnerable and homeless in the chilly winter nights experience abuse and violence on nightly basis. *IL* depicts both scenarios to the viewer.

16.6.2 Nocturnal Lives: Day Sleepers (2015, UK)

Once I immersed into my nocturnal fieldwork, I began recording the *Nocturnal Lives: Day Sleepers* (NL). The film is sectioned in four short chapters: the workers, language skills, sleep and the market. I filmed the market, my co-workers during the break, before and after the night shift or while driving a forklift to capture the flow and rhythm of the market at different hours. In the first 3 min of the film I comment briefly on how I accessed the field site. My commentary fades as the stories shared by the 3 day-sleepers take stage. These are three migrant men working six nights per week at the New Spitalfields market. NL conveys crucial aspects shared by protagonists – how they cope with the night rhythms and day family lives. All three men expose their hardened lives by the nocturnal landscape in the UK's largest fruit and vegetable market owned and managed by the Corporation of London. All three protagonists, a manager, porter and grocery customer worked at the night market. Each one recollects that the main challenges they faced were: lack of sleep, social isolation and inability to spend time with family due to the demanding nature of night work. One would need to call up on all cinematic kits and skills in order to convey messages of the sensorial kind, if it was not conveyed by the migrant night workers, and the extent to which they invested to make their painstaking journeys to work in London's night market. In NL, I continued the quest of making the lives of day sleepers more visible and palpable. The film is available via green access. I presented it in various academic settings or used it as a tool for teaching, as well as communication medium covering mixed audiences.

⁹Romania joined the EU in 2007. Romanian citizens in the UK were not entitled to work during the seven-year transition, which ended in January 2014.

16.6.3 *Nightshift Spitalfields: A Participatory Approach to Visual Storytelling*

A trailer of the third short film was released in 2016, under the name *Sleepless Bat*. In 2020, however, the short-film *Nightshift Spitalfields* was released at a launch event organised in collaboration with Migrant Voice, in London. It covers themes of immigration, exploitation, homelessness, sleep deprivation, invisibility and lack of decent working rights. What places apart this film from the other two is the depth of the story that focuses solely on Ali, the main protagonist. He is a migrant co-worker from Bulgaria of Roma-Turkish descent. Ali's migration journey is full of twists and turns that he overcame in the 21 years since he left Bulgaria as a teenager. He also appears in NL, as well as the photo montages or other visual representations (see Fig. 16.4 below). I installed a GoPro camera on the roof of the forklift so Ali could film as he worked all night. The more participatory approach is revealed in the shots which offer the viewer, Ali's perspective. In NS, this is visible from the start of the film when he chooses the shooting angle (front or rear) depending on how he drives his forklift (back or front wheels). During NS shooting, Ali also decided what and whom to capture as he drives through the market. Among the long hours of travail in the night market, there is a breathing moment captured by Ali when he surprises one of his co-workers with his live camera. The co-worker is framed sitting and half sleeping on the forklift seat while waiting for a customer.

In NS, Ali shows his life as a night porter trapped between the impossibility to find a day job due to a lack of English language skills and poor competencies in other areas of work, and the never-ending lack of sleep that he experiences throughout the 5 years that he spent working at the night market. The



Fig. 16.4 Night porter

protagonist-turned-filmmaker experiments with the visual tools in a non-traditional documentarist style. For these reasons, the audience needs to focus in order to understand Ali's mental world vis-à-vis his outer world. The turning point in his story reveals problems with homelessness, which pushes his surviving skills beyond the limit he usually copes with. He spends the three nights of homelessness in emergency accommodation offered by the Metropolitan Police, between sleeplessness and the harsh reality of a migrant family in the UK needing to camp outside the Hackney council, north London, while his homelessness application is being processed. As a researcher, I am now totally hidden behind the scenes. I accompany him and his family throughout this period. I interpret for them at the Hackney council during the assessment; we spend time over coffee and have lunches together. At the end of four exhausting days in temporary accommodation, the family is given emergency accommodation in North London. New challenges appear, such as Ali commuting north to east London to work, and his wife and children commuting to attend school. All this time, his wife is pregnant with their third child. In this heart-wrenching poem, Ali, the *Sleepless Bat*, shows an immense will to survive the callous world in which they swim in need to survive the crisis they face.

16.7 Discussion

This section discusses the outcomes of employing methods to build ethnographic theory in night work studies within migration. In this spirit, I am indebted to Wright Mills (1959/2000, p. 215), who explains that “intellectual craftsmanship” is about exchanging conversations on the “actual ways of working” that emerging researchers best hone their craft with. In this vein, the *sensorial experiences* (senses, suffering and skills), *visual* and *cyber-ethnographic* tools crafted here, bridge mind and body to restore lacunas in social science, broadly, and to include visual methods in migration research, specifically (Wacquant, 2015). As I reflected on my migratory experience and the lessons learnt during the doctoral fieldwork, I found two key hallmarks: a *bodily method* that works in many contexts: away and at home, with migrants and locals, in the day and at night; and a *mode* of approaching the field. In flesh and blood, I enter the field I study armed with sociological constructs to objectify workers' bodily labour using cyber-ethnographic tools that capture, measure and monitor sensorial experiences, and to create different visual storytelling of migrants.

Ethnographers-turned-insiders immersed into the field could hardly pass as flies-on-the-wall. In a fruit and vegetable night market, I was one of the bodies-turned-machines, another post-Fordist worker whose labour power was extracted through “maximization of bodily and mental potential” methods for the purpose of maximising capital (Chelcea, 2014, p. 40). At the night market, I became a bio-automaton just like my co-workers. I too accumulated a bodily capital that was useful in performing precariousness, at the market. Would I have not been immersed for the time and depth of the thick ethnography that I carried out in 2015, and laced into words

here, my bodily knowledge would have remained as instrumental as floor washing (an unpaid-overtime task) following a 16/17-hour long night shift. Instead, this epistemological tool, my body, that I used to capture and sediment knowledge or my “means of production” combined with this ethnographic craft of writing to represent differently (and as a contribution to ethnographic theory) issues experienced by MWNS (Wacquant, 1995, p. 67). By that I mean, that it has been a personal, subjective affair where, as a researcher, I immersed *in situ*, corporeally, mentally, visually and viscerally. For the calibre of such depths, its visual outcomes cannot be dejected for its subjective source of data, as seen by the Chicago sociological school (Russell, 2007).

Furthermore, the visual ethnography is multi-layered. First, I was able to “see” what I could have not without the camera – how far *real* is from the *reel* lives; this led me to create more real, more different “representations” of migrants in the nocturnal landscape; finally, I learnt from the different kinds of cooperation that involved working with filmmakers and my co-worker to create and produce the *trilogy*. Both the two co-filmmakers and Ali, the co-participant in the *Sleepless Bat*, have taught me invaluable, practical and theoretical insights: to stand back and let participants give the field perspective as they see fit; to rely on “tools of visual sociology” to construct social messages (Wacquant, 2005, p. 70); that “images are everywhere” (Pink, Tutt, Dainty, & Gibb, 2010), and the power of the image offers the space for interpretation with multiple meanings and fascinating endings, unlike other methods. Here are the results.

16.8 Bring the *real* Lives into *reel* Stories

The “*real* lives into *reel* stories” quest is a work in progress. I documented on *reel* the *real* lives to illustrate through visual methods that although a global city in high demand of migrant workers, “other” wo/men workers have no guarantee other than to remain faceless, voiceless and vulnerable. Although the exploration of *invisible*, *nocturnal* and *sleepless* migrants in this *trilogy* does not hold itself as an exhaustive account of how migration is depicted at the cinema, it can be argued that the three short films illustrate how visual methods accompanying enacted ethnography provide insights into the *real* aspects in a nebulous contemporary society living 24/7. The invisibility of migrant workers is symptomatic of a capitalist system causing the crisis within itself and a state of non-inclusiveness of the “others” – the immigrant anti-hero.

Some real lives fail to become *reel* stories. Consequently, researchers need to create space and focus on methods that allow co-participants to speak through images to mixed audiences. The result of using mixed methods could wed the experiences lived behind the scenes in a traditional, narrative sense with the more modern visual ethnographies in order to guide the viewer towards a certain standpoint of analysis in a gentle, non-prescriptive manner, but at the same time allowing for multiple interpretations by the wider, critical public, thus, greater

impact. Moreover, the mix of classical research tools and visual approaches to document people-on-the-move, aids teaching and dissemination of findings to wider audiences, on a range of issues facing developed societies: migration and refugee crisis, poverty, lack of education and rights to decent work for fe/male migrants around the world. Some uncharted contexts explored through larger studies could also be included in such a portfolio.

Without my body, I could not feel the depths of precariousness invading bodily, emotional and intellectual functions of MWNS. When co-workers could not articulate as clearly as I needed to understand their experiences, my own “body notes” would reveal those depths and nuances. In short, I accumulated the bodily knowledge or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977/2000) by using the six ‘s’ factors approach: *symbol wielders* are *sentient* beings who *suffer*, hone their *skills*, *sediment* knowledge in their bodies that are *situated* in a specific context (Wacquant, 2004, 2015), which I developed elsewhere (MacQuarie, 2019b). Without my camera, however, I could have not framed and portrayed my co-workers, and even engage them as I did when I have shown them the photos. Strikingly co-workers refused me an interview, but they accepted to appear on the camera. As for co-workers appearing in front of the (photo/video) camera lens it is a clear advantage for researchers, instead of the classic audio recorder. Nikielska-Sekula (Chap. 2, in this volume) also found that behind the value of photography there are two key aspects to learn from: the process that triggers social relations and the sensory experience of fieldwork with equally powerful messages to words. Nonetheless, once in front of the video/photo camera, the participants are recorded and their identity could be compromised. Thus, it is important to consider the ethical implications of visual methods on the privacy of those participating in our research and those remaining visible long after. In order to prevent damage to participants’ integrity, researchers must follow to the letter the instructions of their participants regarding what parts of their experience can or cannot appear on screen. That applies to voice recognition. I cannot say with certainty that these methods will damage the image of the participants, but I can make sure that I give the participants “the right to disappear” with every possible opportunity.

On this ethnographic journey, I have faced major challenges to examine invisible aspects of lives lived in the dark from within. Despite the bodily pains and aches, emotional unrest and social isolation and low mood that I experienced while a doctoral researcher, the journey has given me the insight that I lacked when I performed precarity as a labour migrant in Turkey. I exposed the steps that I took to understand the reality of people (in the actual conditions where they exist and operate daily and nightly), and are seen as “others” – migrants perceived by the mainstream society as foreign, alien and strange. Once I re-emerged from my object of study – precarious livelihoods of migrant night workers in global London – I brought to surface *reel* stories that include, but are not limited to vulnerability, marginalisation, and exploitation of immigrant night workers, which remain unchallenged in today’s non-inclusive societies. The power of the image in the hands of researchers-turned-filmmakers can change that by documenting the lives of migrants *at home, away from home*.

16.9 Conclusion

24/7 cities' night-time economy depend on and demand low-skilled, manual workers. Yet, these people are invisible to the mainstream (day) society due to the nature of night work activities. The researcher's *nightworkshop* methodology contributes to the current volume with an innovative portfolio of tools that capture hidden experiences and unhide visual representations on night work. It symbolises the close relationship between the visual and touch senses. In other words, I wanted to convey the significance of the body in experiencing and understanding the world. I used cyber-ethnography to objectify the sensorial experiences, which I put in a visual form to present my research findings and to create digital storytelling about migrants working the night shift. The bodily methods to experience this nocturnal landscape through my body's eyes and sedimented in bodily notes – *veni, vidi, vici* – made possible to bring this guide alive for novice and experienced researchers alike. The core message is that we experience the world that surrounds us, with our bodies and through the senses, while at the same time we use our eyes to receive (and transmit) messages. The “message” is a window into a reality documented through research, before the camera captures it, that lives outside of film that re-presents it to an audience and lives long after the researcher has left the field site/film set.

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Chapter 17

Conclusions: “Ways of Representation”: Is a Reflexive Representation Possible?



İlke Şanlıer Yüksel and Aydın Çam

In his seminal work, Berger (1972) introduces “ways of seeing” as the ways in which meaning is given to the things which are depicted that stand for something. Image-based ethnography has long been interested in these meaning construction processes, namely representations. The ethnographer, or the researcher – as part of the meaning-making process – produces and/or reproduces ways of representation, along with the research design and the outcome. Then the question arises: is a reflexive representation possible? The three chapters in the fourth section of this volume offer thoughts to provoke answers to this question and evoke a theoretical discussion on the dialectical relation between migration and the representation of it, through research.

In his chapter, Davide Gnes discusses how video, as a visual methodological tool, can complement more conventional qualitative data collection and analysis methods such as in-depth interviews, field notes from participant observation, archival materials and audio data. To that end, he draws on some examples from his fieldwork and, in particular, from his experience in filming the music performances of Los Angeles based immigrant organization, *Jornaleros del Norte*'s. By performing music, the organization brings day workers who have emigrated from Central and South America into contact, organizes protest events in symbolic places such as detention centres and increases awareness for the wider public. Gnes explores the value and the potential of researcher and respondent generated video, along with other visuals/photographs, both as a database and as an analytical tool. Production and compilation of audio-visual content reiterate musical performances, transforming into political mobilization for immigrants' rights. Gnes' chapter also reflects on associated ethical problems.

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In the second chapter of this section, with the emphasis on reflexivity and representation, Tina Magazzini, in focusing on politicized issues such as migration and/or ethnicity, asks what role filmmakers, curators and artists play as knowledge producers or agents of recognition. In order to provide answers, she examines three European cases, namely the Expatriate Archive Centre (EAC), the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC) and “Bunkers,” a documentary by Anne-Claire Adet, to present ways of challenging conventional modes of representation of migrants and minorities. She examines the ways of representation based on what is portrayed and by whom, showing that the modes of representation are not causal, but rather teleological. Magazzini also traces the encounter between the production and the distribution of knowledge, discussing, for instance, what happens when those actors in charge of knowledge-production are part of this embodied culture.

Finally, in the third chapter, Julius-Cezar MacQuarie addresses a trilogy of films (*Invisible Lives*, *Nocturnal Lives* and *the Nightshift Spitalfields*) as part of his research on migrants working the night shift. He proposes an innovative approach of “nightworkshop” that provides scholars with visual-analytical tools to capture the “not-visible.” What is more provocative in terms of his research design is the collaborative method of film production that he applies. He cooperates with another filmmaker for *Invisible Lives* and with a research participant for the *Nightshift Spitalfields*. His longitudinal research strategy allows him to discuss the phenomenon of an embodied knowledge, as ways of representing migrant bodily experiences, within temporal and spatial dimensions. In addition to filmmaking as a visual methodology, MacQuarie also resorts to sensorial experiences and digital tools to track his bodily inputs as an ethnographer, to reflect on migrant’s experiences. He further discusses the responsibility of the researcher on creating space and focusing on methods that allow co-participants to speak through images to a wider public, and therefore on how migration is depicted.

These three chapters by Gnes, Magazzini and MacQuarie, in the search for migrants’ subjectivity, are exploring the relationship between image and knowledge in ethnographic enquiry, through the lens of representation. In this concluding chapter, we will reflect on key methodological, ethical and theoretical issues connected to the ways of representation and the role of the researcher. To discuss further, let’s first look at their framing of visual methodologies in relation to analytical categories.

17.1 Common Analytical Categories: Visual Storytelling, Opportunities for Co-participation and Reflexivity

The first analytical category in all three chapters is the illustrative capacity of visual storytelling. Migration scholars are increasingly keen to work on visual materials of the everyday, as well as visual materials in the media, or as media. Some of the researchers employ the visual as data resources, such as participant-generated mental maps (Buhr, Chap. 3, in this volume), or use of available photography and videos

(Pink, 2001), while others choose to visualize the data by creating computer-assisted visuals gathered through geospatial technologies (Buckle, 2020); mapping of socio-spatial relations (Awan, 2017; Awan & Langley, 2013); or making films/video essays (Pink, Kürti, & Afonso, 2004; Plambech, 2016). Therefore, researchers gain a methodological tool to generate data by themselves, to gather participant-generated data and to collect already available images through adopting visual methodologies through an integrated approach (Ball & Gilligan, 2010).

While such research equips migration scholars with visual-analytical tools, it also enables the analysis of social interaction, bringing the invisible to a wider audience and providing a visual narrative to the reader when the findings are reported visually. For this reason, visual storytelling is used as a way of reporting the research with footage, infographics, photographs, and even digital visualization techniques to reflect on the corporeality of the research subject, as in MacQuarie’s chapter. Therefore, visual storytelling may well be a research design rather than just a technique. In fact, MacQuarie carries out an ontological discussion that converges the “reel” (for what is represented), into the “real” (for what is there as social reality), through auto-ethnographic encounters. A similar proposition is reflected in Magazzini’s chapter discussing *Bunkers*, the documentary film. Through embodiment of an esthetical understanding (such as using vertical shots by a mobile phone and a narrative asserting the feeling of being trapped) *Bunkers* illustrates *cinéma vérité*, the art of filming to convey candid truth.

Co-participation and reciprocity emerge as the third common analytical category for contributors in this section. Visuals allow a more reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the participants. Gnes, investigating the relationship between what is seen and what is known in ethnographic enquiry, identifies collaborative video-making, ensuring reflexivity for the researcher, as well as an alternative insight for participants, along with rich data. Thus, these collaborative research practices, through employing visual content, “push disciplinary boundaries and help represent populations which otherwise remain silent” (Fedyuk & Zentai, 2018, p. 178). Participatory forms of observatory filmmaking are also discussed in detail in the previous section on participation (please see the third section of this volume and Cantat’s concluding chapter for a detailed commentary). The researchers enconcing themselves into the field to see through migrant’s gaze is one thing, but what is more intriguing is a migrant herself/himself reflecting her/his position and engaging in the knowledge production process. For example, for her PhD research, Eda Elif Tibet uses documentary filmmaking as a way to codirect and coproduce ethnographic documentaries about, or by, migrants, while at the same time employ participant photography with unaccompanied minor asylum seekers (Tibet, 2017). She codirected *Ballad for Syria* (2017) with Maisa Alhafez, a musician from Syria, and *Refugee Here I Am* (2015) with Enzo Ikah, political refugee and human rights activist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Collaboration with migrants in research, and in filmmaking specifically, have political potential as they provide a space for their own voices and artistic claims within migrant communities. Visual tools, and especially films, usually reach a wider public than conventional scholarly

outputs. Therefore, researchers/filmmakers may play a mediating role between the migrant and the rest of the world.

This volume shows us the diversity on the use of visual content and has also given authors opportunities to facilitate reflexivity. Reflexivity “required by a dialogical approach may also make clear some of the boundaries of social science conventions” (Ball, 2014, p. 151) as the third common analytical category. There is ample space for reflexivity in accounts of collaborative work between the researcher and the migrant, and the role that images play in disseminating new knowledge. In her chapter, Magazzini frames reflexivity in the role of filmmakers, curators and artists, as knowledge producers and as knowledge-brokers, to reflect on “how artistic and archival experience can inform research” (Magazzini, Chap. 15, in this volume). The organized, but not necessarily institutionalized, circulation of images for political purposes, enables the artist, as well as the researcher, to reach the voice of the subject. This overlaps with MacDougall’s (1998, p. 89) conceptualization of “deep reflexivity,” which fosters the dialogical relationship between the researcher and the image-maker, whether the process is collaborative or not. The film, and many other visual materials for that matter, represent the relationships that are produced in the content. In all three chapters in this section, we can follow the traces of reflexivity as the authors describe the content of the films they made or analysed through and narrates filmmaking experiences that emphasize the subjectivities of the informant (Gnes, Chap. 14, in this volume), of the ethnographer/filmmaker/videomaker (Gnes and MacQuarie, Chaps. 14, and 16, in this volume), of the artist (Magazzini, Chap. 15, in this volume), and of the reader. Collaborative approaches in research and ways of representation are connected with the reflexivity advocated in visual methodologies. This is manifest in Banks’ assertion that “all image production by social researchers in the field – indeed all first-hand social research of any kind – must be collaborative to some extent” because the researcher’s “very presence amongst a group of people is the result of a series of social negotiations” (2001, p. 119). Authors in this volume join collaboratively with their participants in the research process in various ways, specifically in visual practices, by which visual representations are created, including image production activities. This discussion brings us to a wider debate on the ways of representation that link the chapters of this section.

17.2 Lost and Found in Representations

Three chapters in this section, and others in the volume, provoke a discussion that can strip the representation issue from an essentialist standpoint and incorporate migrants’ agency through research. Unfortunately, the main pitfall of major research focusing on the representation of migrants in mediated written texts is ontologically embedded in their units of analysis. Media texts offer very rich research material, but at the same time, they push scholarly work away from the field and the migrants themselves. As they exclude migrant agency, research focusing on representation in

media texts are also inclined to reproduce the existing structural meaning-making strategies and conceptual framework of methodological discrimination, even though they are apt to utilize critical discourse analytical methodologies propounded by van Dijk (1993), Wodak (2013), Wodak and Meyer (2009), Fairclough (1989, 1995) and others. Fortunately, despite their methodological and epistemological differences, the three chapters in this section demonstrate how visual methodologies offer possibilities of incorporating migrants themselves into the representation debate.

However, it is useful to briefly look at the studies investigating the mediated representations of migrants and ethnic minority groups. Since our perceptions of social reality are more and more shaped by media texts, both traditional and new media, the increase in the number of academic studies working on these texts is also inevitable. An important part of this growing literature includes immigrant representations. The migratory movements and mobilities of refugees that took place after the start of civil war in Syria in 2011, has entered into the European academia’s agenda in many contexts as well as in the context of media representations, especially after these migratory movements turn towards Europe. As public discourse and policies are also shaped by these mediated representations, the number of studies on this subject increases with the speed of light (for an overview, see Berry, Inaki Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2015, Bozdağ & Smets, 2017, Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017, Smets & Bozdağ, 2018, Smets, Mazzocchetti, Gerstmans, & Mostmans, 2019). Several studies listed here reveal that media coverage of migrants and refugees, even in different geographical contexts, reiterate troubling dichotomies of “victims” versus “threats,” often accompanied with “illegality” discourses, labelling them as “outsiders”, useful or dangerous, narrate them voiceless, and also “legitimize and delegitimize policies relevant to them” (Smets & Bozdağ, 2018, p. 295). Thus, the rise in mediated anti-immigrant discourse to be transformed into electoral capital, keep migrants consistently marginalized from the public realm and serves growing right-wing populism and racism in Europe by fuelling moral panics (see Critcher, Hughes, Petley, & Rohloff, 2013).

In his commentary, Critcher categorizes immigration as one of the five major topics that constitute moral panic, calling it a “serial moral panic” which is “routinely produced by the popular press” (2015, pp. xxiii–xxiv). According to him, it operates through “accusations against the newcomers” as “they bring alien cultures, so refuse to integrate; that they make excessive demands on systems of welfare, education and housing; and that they are excessively involved in crime” (p. xxiv). Discourses that go back and forth between humanitarianism and securitization are manufactured and operationalized for boundary-making and exclusion. Therefore, this sets “the cruel conditionality that underlies current humanitarian responses within European border regimes” (Holzberg, Kolbe, & Zaborowski, 2018, p. 536), for example in Germany, deciding which immigrant deserves to live.

The year 2015 is marked as the “European crisis” as hundreds of thousands of refugees cross the Mediterranean border, exacerbating the moral panic. As Alan Kurdi’s washed-ashore image on the Turkish coast was circulated globally, a schizoid positionality inaugurated this moral panic, transforming the discourse from securitization to victimization. The flow of Kurdi’s, and similar images, show the

power of visualization and the transformative effect on the perceptions and meaning-making processes. Through objectifying and dehumanizing images, representation of migrants and refugees deploys the victimization discourse that depoliticises and de-historicizes them. Furthermore, those images, including Kurdi's, reproduce the act of crossing borders which legitimizes the "crisis" discourse and moves the focus away from the migrants themselves. While these mechanisms are gaining strength in digital environments, there is also a growing literature on "the potential of voice and agency in the digital new media environment" (Nikunen, 2019, p. 412). Converging diverse means of communication that offer rich visuality, digital media could recall representation in various modes, including self-representation.

Although mediated representations are highly contested in quoted literature, in this volume authors go beyond the description of representations, to discuss, how, despite contextual differences, researchers, artists, filmmakers and migrants themselves profoundly engage with these representations within participatory visual methodologies, in order to produce counter-narratives. Self-representation, the notion that migrants and/or members of ethnic communities reclaim their subjectivity, is one pattern that all three chapters encompass. Gnes (Chap. 14, in this volume) encourages members of the band to reflect on the videos he filmed. Thus, while increasing the reliability of the research through data triangulation, he also enables the participants to produce the voice to represent themselves. MacQuarie goes further in coproducing the film *Nightshift Spitalfields* with a Bulgarian-Turkish migrant co-worker. While he, as a researcher is "totally hidden behind the scenes", his participant, as "the protagonist-turned-filmmaker, experiments with the visual tools in a non-traditional documentarist style" (Chap. 16, in this volume). So, when he activates the power of filmmaking as visual methodology, he steps back and lets the migrants tell their own stories to make the space visible for interpretation with multiple meanings. A similar but slightly different discussion is also made by Magazzini (Chap. 15, in this volume) on filmmaking as self-representation. She, as the researcher, is not the one who filmed Bunkers. Even the director is not an immigrant. The use of shots taken by migrants, the aesthetics and the narrative of the film enables the visual content to transform the tool into a space where refugees in Geneva speak for themselves. Therefore, visual self-representations challenge depoliticised discourses, and dehumanized policies for that matter, and raise claims for visibility and recognition. So, the social reality surrounding migration is constructed in a non-linear path of conflict, between depiction and imagination, where the migrants deliberately contest visual representation and construct the "visual self" to be present in the public sphere.

Representational politics could be realized through institutionalized public spaces such as museums, archives or cultural institutes. Magazzini discusses the collective cultural practice developed around narratives and visual representation of minority groups, examining ongoing discussions about the dialogical relationship between political and artistic representation. She puts "special emphasis on the consequences of which types of stories are told and about whom and who the storyteller" is (Chap. 15, in this volume). While the Expatriate Archive Centre operates as a representational space to re-create social memories, the European Roma

Institute for Arts and Culture serves as a field for linguistic, cultural, and political claims for and about the Roma population in a transnational context. Like museological practice, these collective cultural bodies are “representations to be read and interpreted, and therefore must provide space and presence for the multitude of voices” (Yanes, 2011, p. 28).

Research practices engaging visual methodologies do not only serve as an instrument in varied techniques, but also as innovative forms of epistemological declaration, where the researcher herself/himself employs dynamic representational strategies. As visual methods can be utilized in order to collect data, as well as disseminate it, they provide researchers with a range of tools for constructing a way of representation. We can observe this turning point in MacQuarie’s transformation as a researcher/filmmaker in his trilogy, as he starts to produce with a co-filmmaker and ends up co-producing with a participant. An interesting example of visual methods changing the very essence of scholarship is Nick Sousanis’ (2015) doctoral dissertation in graphic novel form, entitled *Unflattening*, about the relationship between words and pictures. Sousanis is awarded a doctorate in education at Columbia University. His bold attempt to disseminate knowledge in an unconventional visual manner is very encouraging as it signals to disrupt the academy’s stereotypical representations.

The chapters in this section discuss the potential of research-based visual strategies through collaborative practices in an epistemological triad of visual methodologies, ethnography and artistic production, to produce counter-narratives to dominant stereotypes and/or ways of representations within a range of subject matter. This particularly brings us to the ethical stance.

17.3 Ethical Issues

Along with reflexivity and collaboration, ethical issues have emerged as one of the common themes in employing visual approaches to ethnographic research throughout the entire book. Visual techniques such as filmmaking, that we read three examples of in this section, open the space for more diverse representation practices, while at the same time being more prone to ethical violations, both during the research process and also during dissemination after research findings become publicly available. Difficulties in securing participants’ consent, protecting anonymity, protecting the data and unequal distribution of power among participants and the researcher are symptomatic of fundamental ethical problems.

One strategy to avoid these difficulties is obtaining ethical clearance prior to commencing the research, as a rule of thumb. For visual methods, in addition, the reflexive positionality of the researcher and the participants is exclusively important as their relationship will form the knowledge production. For that matter, securing consent is not only getting an approval for participation, but also a contract for common grounds and negotiation between the researcher and the participants on the research process, i.e. research objectives, potential implications of the findings and

participation, duration and terms of participation, negotiations on the skills to be used (such as filmmaking, if applicable) and issues such as privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Protecting anonymity is harder to maintain as images are profoundly information-rich constructs. More importantly, dissemination of the images beyond the control of the researcher and the participants may have implications in different time periods and spatial contexts (Nikielska-Sekuła, Chap. 2, in this volume). It is also difficult to preserve the privacy and anonymity of the existing bystanders in the frame, while producing images, even if the approval of the participants exists. As Gnes (Chap. 14, in this volume) discusses, videography, for example, documents the undocumented. However, as discussed throughout the chapter, being there could be advocated by the participants as a political position.

We have read examples on how videography and filmmaking, as a form of intervention, are employed in migration research, rather than being merely a methodological practice. This is obviously an ideological positioning to challenge the unequal distribution of power between researcher and researched. Both should engage in a reflexive process in order to help improve ethical practice and determining factors of mutual decision-making, as we have seen in the filmmaking practice of MacQuarie and his co-participants. The reflexivity of the researcher also ensures visuals' trustworthy representation of the interactions and researched phenomena and helps researcher to avoid the "spectacle of migration" (Desille, Chap. 4, in this volume). Therefore, the researcher should be able to act as mediator and interlocutor in this participatory process.

Another ethical issue arises from a technical dimension of visual methods. While digital technologies facilitate the practice of visual methods in migration studies, they also create sheer volume of both social and computational data. The analysis of this size of data can be problematic and if enough precautions are not taken to protect it, the circulation of the data in cyberspace may violate ethical norms. Although it is not always possible, visual methods such as filmmaking should be self-funded to avoid financial contributor's implicit or explicit agenda setting attempts. There is a critical literature growing on funding issues related to migration research (see Cantat, 2020), which criticizes the hypocrisy of funding institutions.

17.4 Commentary

The contribution of this section to the volume is that visual methods such as filmmaking, videography and artistic/cultural productions are not simply useful for representing research, but they constitute a research method in itself. Three modes of inference, namely collaboration, reflexivity and representation are discussed in three chapters and help us to construct an interpretive string, connecting to a theoretical framework. The *modus operandi* of visual methods, as demonstrated by Gnes, Magazzini and MacQuarie, involves the reflexive engagement of researcher and the collaborative practice of research. The epistemological and methodological contributions of visual methodology can be listed as follows: visual data breaks the

boundaries imposed by spatiality and temporality; it enables others, including research participants, to reflect and analyse the data; it is open for participatory techniques; and produces materials possible to be used for educational, cultural and political purposes.

In addition, as Boccagni and Schrooten (2018, p. 211) aptly assert “ethnographers are thus required to also integrate visual aspects of data and to develop a new set of skills”. Gnes and MacQuarie, as ethnographers, integrate visual methods into their research and they accumulate a set of skills of data collection and analysis, as well as dissemination. These new skills transform the researchers into artisans crafting data, a tool to which bits of information can be brought together by collaborators to bring out migrant agency. Not only data collection but also data presentation tools, visual methods make the scholarship available to a mixed audience and a general public. Thus, it reveals misrepresentations. Not only are images everywhere (Pink, 2001), but people are also documenting on a daily basis, bringing those who are invisible and marginalized before our eyes, entailing a reflective space.

Migrants, or any other subjects for that matter, can tell their own narratives through visual storytelling methodologies as our/their lives are wrapped around images and visualization tools. The way we construct meanings through these images, what MacQuarie calls “new representations,” counters widespread stereotypical representations. Visual methodology enables subjectivity to be constituted by images. It is a systematic process locating migrants and marginalized ethnic communities at the very centre of discussions in order to politicize and historicize them. Therefore, it makes it possible that migrants reclaim their subjectivity, as opposed to being scapegoats in anti-immigrant and xenophobic representational mechanisms. This methodology enables us to question the relations of dominance and power imposed by “visual culture(s)”, because visual culture is often more effective and deceitful than written culture in internalizing these power positions. Therefore, as researchers, we need to embrace visual methodologies as a tool that can defeat stereotypical representations of migrants and minority groups stuck between securitization/criminalization and humanitarian discourses. It is a difficult and demanding road ahead, but our authors show that reflexive representations are possible.

Of course, words matter, but images matter more than ever now, as they have the political potential of transforming the very nature of research.

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Chapter 18

Afterword: Visual Research in Migration. (In)Visibilities, Participation, Discourses



Patricia Prieto-Blanco

Profound developments in terms of scale, diversity of digital media and prosumerism (García-Galera & Valdivia, 2014; Madianou, 2011) in the last decade have resulted in vast monitoring of movement, migratory or otherwise. While migrants have been outlined as digital natives, early adopters and heavy users of digital technologies (Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2014); the intersection of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and migration is still under-researched (Oiarzabal & Reips 2012), Madianou's (2011) work being a notable exception. As Leurs and Prabhakar highlight (2018, p. 247), the implications of the rise of ubiquitous and pervasive technologies (software and hardware) for the migration experience can be grouped in two sets of media practices. On the one hand, these technologies are used to reproduce and (forcefully) enforce top-down control by (state) authorities. On the other, they enable migrants - both voluntary and forced - to connect (dis) affectively,¹ manage kinship and other relationships (Cabalquinto, 2018; Madianou, 2012; Prieto-Blanco, 2016), participate in collective processes (Siapera & Veikou, 2013; Martínez Martínez, 2017; Özdemir, Mutluer & Özyürek, 2019), establish a sense of belonging (Yue, Li, Jin, & Feldman, 2013; Budarick, 2015; Gencel-Bek & Prieto-Blanco, 2020), and move money across borders (Aker, 2018; Batista & Narciso, 2013). “[T]he transformed epistolary base and the communication infrastructure of the migrant experience”, with their distinct affordances, impact on how migration is currently understood via a focus on connectivity and presence. Stay in touch. Remain within reaching distance. Leave, but let your presence linger.

¹Note that throughout this text, the term “(dis)affect” is employed in order to reflect ongoing debates in relation to affective economies (Ahmed, 2004), as well as media and emotions (Wirth & Schramm, 2005).

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Whether for (dis)affective, political, monetary or surveillance purposes, migrants are connected (Diminescu, 2008). Hans Belting approaches the outlined context from a more philosophical approach that responds to the emergent significance of “non-places” (Augé 2009) and liminality. Through the term “nomadic world-citizens”, Belting highlights the relevance of bodies as materials where images (and stories) reside due to the expanding ephemerality of our ties to physical locations, as well as to the growing relevance of interactions in telecommunicative spaces (2001 pp. 39–41), or “tele-cocoons.” Tele-cocoons are ubiquitous and immediate, and their proliferation responds to the need of “nomadic world-citizens” of communicating in time rather than over time. Both bodies and “tele-cocoons”² remain constant for migrants, even when in “non-places”.

Importantly, Belting’s triad of image, medium and body (Belting, 2001) places emphasis on the sensorial activities and pre-cognitive know-how involved in (visually) mediated strategies of belonging. In turn, media use needs to be seen a place-making activity, and media as embodied practices. This senso-affective understanding of media (Pink, 2006, 2011) reveals the limitations of rationalist and (post)structuralist tools of analysis that have focused intensively on codes, ideologies and symbols (representation in short), as well as the shortcomings of the study of media focused on technological development, since both approaches are media-centred and often forget about the holistic, phenomenological processes in which media take part together with daily habits and other elements of material culture. As highlighted in the introduction to this volume, such a shift is the result of becoming aware of the ability of items, images included, to have a life of their own, and precipitate (dis)affective engagements/interactions (Edwards, 2012), functioning as a currency (Ahmed, 2004). The task at hand is to explore “[e]ngaged agency in day-to-day living” (Moores, 2018, p. 9) being aware that a) meaning and sense are constructed both through content (representation), as well as through contextual thinking with and through the body; b) the aforementioned shifts respond to White Global-North concerns and may not be pertinent to other socio-cultural context(s); c) research on tacit and intersubjective knowledge demands a high level of reflexivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992); d) the work inherently demands a trans/interdisciplinary approach that takes into account in equal measure explorations of media affordances, (mediated) everyday practices, and processes of emplacement and embodiment.

As Lehmuskallio explains, “looking as an action cannot happen without a body” (2012 p. 38). Thus, pictorial media and material mediations are always dependent on the human actor looking/creating/sharing/operating with them. This means that the embodied self always exerts some control over images but the interactions with

²These telecommunicative spaces have otherwise been named tele-cocoons, which is also a verb. Habuchi coined the term: “(...) a zone of intimacy in which people can continuously maintain their relationships with others who they have already encountered without being restricted by geography and time” (2005, p. 167).

the images are also always dependent on perception (interpretation of information that results in meaning). Interactions are organized in social settings around shared understandings, whereby one shared practice alone is enough to give rise to mutual interaction, and images are “transmitted in the interplay between media carrying images and bodies directing their attention in perceiving them” (Lehmuskallio 2012, p. 40). Perceiving bodies engage in the representation and communication of shared moments and/or realities, all of this inscribed in place/emplaced (Pink, 2011; Pink, 2011a). When our ties to place become ephemeral, volatile, and mutable, we turn our bodies into materials where images reside. Our remembering bodies are thus linked to spatial and temporal experiences. Bodies become temporal carriers of images, places where signifying processes and renegotiation of bonds take place. Bodies become media in use that allow the interactive generation of collective images. These foster interaction, help to generate spaces of (dis)affect, and enable active participation and on-going processes of (un)belonging (Prieto-Blanco, 2016a).

The exploration of the interplays and interactions between images, media and human actors could be further refined using Hennion’s work on *attachment*, as it takes into consideration the *attachment* itself, the experience of *being attached*, and the question of distributed agency (2012). It must be noted that Hennion’s understanding of practices as socio-technological construction in concrete experiential contexts owes much to Bourdieu’s habitus.³ The ways we *attach* to each other are situational and experiential, and they concern the shared and common, be that past experiences or objects, emplaced in the public, the private or the in-between realm. *Attaching* demands work and commitment, the same two features of contemporary intimacy (Jamieson, 2005, pp. 198–199). When the *attachment* happens at a distance, mediations of the shared becomes – for better or for worse – a powerful instrument of intimate boundary work. Exploring such *attachments* and their construction requires empirical research, as well as a holistic approach to research that can only be delivered by *being attached* to research (Hennion 2012, p. 8). Thereby, the positionality of the researcher and the ethics of the research process take on importance. Much can thus be gained from engaging with the methodological tradition of visual sociology (Becker, 1974, 2003; Harper, 1988, 2012) and narrative inquiry (Moen, 2006; Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013; Alpagu, 2015), as these two approaches feature heavily reflexivity, participation and iterative informed consent.

³Habitus is “a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group” (Bourdieu 1977, p. 86). Moores’ recent proposal to move beyond a textualist approach to the analysis of mediations also includes working with Bourdieu’s social theory of practice in order to counteract the phenomenological tendency to generalisms (Moores, 2018, p. 15). In my exploration of photographic practices of transnational families, I also suggested such an approach (Prieto-Blanco, 2016a).

18.1 What Does Visual Research Methods Add to the Study of Migration?

Visual researchers (Rose, 2001, 2014; Pink 2001, 2006, 2011; Bach, 2007; Mannay, 2015; Lobinger & Schreiber, 2017) drive to develop an ethical, respectful and inclusive methodological approach, along with the firm intention to advance multi-shaped texts in which knowledge is constructed by still and moving images as well as by written text (and I may add objects to this list). The ethos of visual research is to explore emplaced practices. Although elaborate, visual research designs ensure that adequate time and space is given to evaluate the ongoing collection of material during field-work, because a basic premise of the approach is that the negotiation process between participants and the researcher starts in the first information session and it continues throughout the entire research process (Prieto-Blanco, 2016). The aim is to enable participants to fully understand, and critically engage, with the implications of the dissemination of material, academic or otherwise. Further insights into the constant, while intermittent negotiation of trust, access and (re) presentation typical of visual research is offered by Frers (Chap. 5, in this volume). Under the term “ethics in motion”, Frers certainly understands the research process as intentional, reflective, and foremost actively human (Bach, 2007, p. 281); but more importantly, he advocates for an approach involving guidelines rather than rules, which in turn both presupposes and acknowledges researchers’ competence and craft. This vital vote of confidence has ramifications at institutional and legalistic levels, as well as in terms of the ever-unsettled relation between seeing and knowing, which Cambre following Berger recently reminded us of (2019). However, actively interrogating the positionality of researchers and participants is not only a question of methodology and ethics, but also of class, as many chapters featured in this volume evidence.

Building onto Harper’s fundamental employment of video to capture and convey emotional, tacit and intersubjective aspects of an object of study beyond the ivory tower of academia, in this volume, Stefano Piemontese (Chap. 10, in this volume) reflects on the craft of collaborative visual research and on the potentials of visual methods to disturb normative representations/perceptions of oppressed groups. A subversive idea that structures most of his text (and research) is that of queering the standard academic practice of anonymity in data collection/distribution in favour of literate/informed participation in collaborative, experimental video-making. Although unacknowledged, Piemontese’s thick descriptions of ethnographic work strongly draws from Pink’s sensory ethnography in that his positionality, previous experiences and multi-sense engagement with “Romanian Roma youngsters living between Spain and Romania” enable a continuous reflexive and flexible approach to research, which in turn evidences that much of academic practice is structured along class lines, and that genuine collaboration emerges when the research process allows for “unpreparedness, indecision, and failure [which] are fundamental ingredients of the co-writing process as they truly promote the creation of non-hierarchical relations” (p. 192).

Although it is clear that the relatively uncharted territory of overlaps and entanglements among migration, ICTs, media practices and affordances needs to be critically addressed (Oiarzabal & Reips, 2012; Ponzanesi & Leurs 2014), the “turn to the digital” suggested by Leurs and Prabhakar (2018), needs to be contextualized within a wider discussion that also takes class into account, as evidenced through Piemontese’s contribution in this volume. Even when doublings and intersections among migrants, software and hardware happens intuitively and organically, class impacts on their form and purpose. In a recent publication, Patterson and Leurs argue for the connection of gender and sexuality to transnational identities (2019). In their paper, the distinction between forced migrants and expatriates is utilised to explain the differences in capital among both groups. However, as Darwin’s empirical research on (poly)media practices of two adolescent Filipino migrants evidences, social class plays a major role in the unequal accumulation of cultural and social capital (2018, p. 26). Class and status also structure information networks of migrants (Morgunova, 2019). Thus, while the question of (il)legality and polymediation (Tyma, Herrmann & Herbig, 2015) is paramount for migration studies, attention also needs to be paid to class-inscribed factors when researching active participation of migrant population in the knowledge economy.

Against this background, the relevance of ICT literacy and digital literacy for the study of migration becomes clear. The concept of media literacy includes the contextual exploration of the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media outputs. Media literacy allows for a better understanding of the conditions of production, distribution, and reception of media outputs, whether these are created by individuals or by organizations. Importantly, in the expanded context of new media, media literacy involves the awareness of the question of human agency and non-human agency. An expected extension of media literacy is the awareness and engagement in media justice, understood as advocacy to demand ethical standards and institutional policies to ensure equality of access to media and to education on media. In short, for Belting’s triad and the “turn to the digital” to work beyond the Global North and capitalist patriarchy, the socio-material approach to technological mediations needs to be intersectional (Collins, 1999; Crenshaw, 1991). Thereby, Wajcman’s “technofeminism” (2004) appears as a plausible and effective meta-framework (Chen, 2019). Emergent perspectives in migration studies need to pay attention to class-inscribed, racial, and gendered bodies in digital and analogue contexts. These contributions in this clearly question normative understandings of ethics in research and provide valuable insights into the pragmatics of Mitchell’s pictorial turn, and destabilise the prominent (or shall I say exclusive?) focus on text production in academia and the concept of authorship. Furthermore, the authors have taken on the task of offering methodological alternatives to the exploration of mobilities with and through the visual, as well as discussing plausible ways of establishing a concrete field of study, namely that of visual research methods for/with migration.

Contemporary visual research in Migration Studies needs to account for lived experiences, personal practical knowledge and told stories. Commonplace visual research outputs, such as the visual essay (Pauwels, 2012; Krase and Shortell, Chap.

8, in this volume), could provide entry points as well as insights into formal and informal aspects of the politics of belonging (Brubaker, 2010, pp. 65–66), which in turn may help to both critically examine and denounce “sophisticated technologies of regulation and control” (ibid., p. 77) of migrants. Three (f)actors are key in the visual research process: the image, which stands for the socially agreed meaning; the participant, who has his/her own story; and the researcher, who elaborates a story fed by images, field-work and theory (ibid.). On the one hand, this frame of work for visual narrative research builds onto Hannah Arendt’s distinction and relations of labour, work, and action (1958). On the other hand, a post-modern sensibility brings with it an intention to stay open and to actively listen to participants. Working visually means to renegotiate continuously and thus researchers need to “[...] trust and allow for uncertainty to be present” (Bach, 2007, p. 291). Stories are told through diverse and coexisting media materialized through strategies such as the use of body language or the inclusion of pictures next to a verbal narration. The technological, social, cultural, and historical contexts in which material qualities of media emerge influence meaning making.

Bacon, Desille and Pate’s contribution (Chap. 12, in this volume) is a reflective piece on an event that brought activists, artists, and academics together to discuss migration. Creating a place of diversity for discussion to happen already counteracts the standard working modus and “scientific” content of academic events, which as the authors argue, limits the possibilities for impact and longevity beyond the ivory tower. Processes of collective inhabitation/emplacement, such as those at the *Equitable Café*, evidence the importance of Belting’s triad - body, medium, image - not only in enabling migrants’/participants’ agencies and voices to emerge, but also in producing lasting and transformative effects. While reading through the Bacon et al. piece, I kept wondering to what extent the flattening power of the *Equitable Café* was due to the positionality of some of the researchers as migrants themselves. In fact, most of the contributions in this volume are written by migrants, researching their peers. In my own work, sharing my migrant past/present with my participants certainly changed how they perceived me. I saw and felt it. At the start of my field-work, the migration background worked as an ice breaker to explain my research interest. Later on, participants shared anecdotes and memories related to the perks and losses of living abroad knowing that I was able to walk in their shoes to a certain extent. Since then, I have started to greatly appreciate the advantages of a shared background and life experience in creating a relationship of trust and empathy with research participants. At the same time, I approach it with great caution, as while being able to draw comparisons with our own life experiences, as researchers, we still need to be open to the element of surprise, which often means retracing the conversation to ask for clarification, so that intersubjective and tacit knowledge can be unveiled. Perhaps the best tool researchers have to sharpen their awareness is self-reflection, which many practice through field-notes, myself included. “I have learnt to disclose some information about my personal life as a strategy to gain rapport and trust from my participants. It is a tricky point this one because I do not want them to be my confidants or my shoulder-support but I feel they need to know more

about myself in order to disclose more information and feel at ease. I still have doubts about the kind of relationship that we have” (Field-notes, September, 2013).

In “Crafting an event, an event on craft”, Bacon et al. further highlight the potential for visual methods to disrupt systemic asymmetries (p. 246). In reflecting on the specific socio-cultural circumstances of migrants, the authors evidence the shortcomings of customary ethical procedures in research - such as parental consent - and the empowering possibilities of symmetrical and collective experimentations of citizenship. Importantly, Bacon et al.’s contribution signals the ultimate paradox of collaborative (visual) research: visibility without presence, the former enabled through representation, the latter curtailed/negated through (state) authorities. This contradiction brings me to a discussion of essential significance in contemporary migration studies, namely, the right to remain invisible, or *the right to disappear*.

18.2 The Right to Disappear

In “Have you just taken a picture of me?”, we are confronted with the ultimate paradox for visual sociologists: raising awareness about a social issue while respecting people’s right to remain invisible. From Lewis Hine’s work at the start of the twentieth century, to [John Stanmeyer’s awarded depiction of contemporary entanglements between migration and ICTs](#), photography, as a place and time based medium, “serves well the purposes of “locating transnationalism”, showing directly that so-called “foreign” or “exotic” practices, associations, and alike are located in a new homeland and constitute a part of it.” (Nikielska-Sekula, Chap. 2, in this volume, p. 38). But, what about the agency – and rights – of those depicted? Well, some of Nikielska-Sekula’s participants, namely Norwegian Turks living in Drammen, actively exercised their right to be represented in their own terms, or not to be depicted at all. It must be noted that these interactions happened in public spaces. Nikielska-Sekula turned to Pink’s sensory ethnography (2006, 2011) – which incorporates Bourdieu’s pledge for reflexive sociology – as a way not only to transform the process of data gathering into data for analysis in itself, but also as a generative solution to navigate agency and participation in spite of the structural limitations imposed onto academic researchers (via ethics committees and other systems of sanctification that, pledging to safeguard the integrity of research, often end up protecting interests of legalistic and neoliberal nature).

Augustová’s research (Chap. 11, in this volume) deals with the fringes of migration. Her work with displaced men along the “Balkan Route”, is intricate and sophisticated, while profoundly human and empathic. At the start of her contribution, Augustová succinctly summarises the problems with quick photojournalism, the only kind that seems to be featured in mainstream media nowadays. Although the ethos of (photo)journalists still responds to the urgency of documenting and reporting situations of violence, despair and other emergencies, their work on the ground responds to neo-liberal logics of productivity, profit generation and swiftness. Under these precarious working conditions, (photo)journalists lack – at the

very least – the time to engage with those being portrayed. This accelerated reporting very often reproduces exploitation, risks and (visual) stereotypes. As Augustová rightly points out, it becomes a matter of dignity. Her research design responds to this situation by dilating time and allowing for complexity to emerge. The combination of photo-voice, photo-elicitation and fieldwork builds the frame of her approach, which is fleshed out by a continuous re-negotiation of access and use of data. She notes that her research design allowed for insights into restricted or forbidden places and practices to be elicited; for meanings and interpretations to be set in motion, narratively and personally; and for participants to obtain evidence – proof of institutional value – of their migratory journeys. However, what I found profoundly radical is that her work built future not only for the researcher but also for participants. The visual narratives generated surpass both the immediacy of journalistic reporting, and the slowness of academic knowledge production, while preserving participants *right to disappear*. This is what I would call genuinely working with participants in partnership. Following Azoulay’s proposal, by fostering prolonged observation and demonstrating responsibility towards the emergencies being photographed, Augustová’s work truly opposes “the absolute conquest of the world as a picture” (2005, p. 43).

With her work on *the citizenry of photography*, Azoulay reminded us – already over a decade ago – that the conditions of the visible in the photographic era are of political and ideological nature foremost (2005, pp. 40–42). All contributions in this volume point out that the socio-cultural agreement upon which the photograph and photography was first built, is not only infelicitous today, but it also provokes/perpetuates inequalities and discrimination, or in short violence and pain. The (migrant) public no longer trusts the photographer. “She [the photojournalist] came and just took many photos of my injuries and my face, although I said no face. After, she sat in a café, edited her photos and left back to the US. How does this help me? She knew nothing about me”. (Imad quoted in Augustová, p. 200). Neither is there trust placed on contemporary spectators. “Pedro: [...] So if it is somebody’s name day and you go to sing to her/his bed and everybody is in their pyjamas and they have bad hair and so on, well I might send those photographs to parents and siblings and that is it. Maria: And to one very good friend. Yes, somebody who knows me but not the neighbor.” (quoted in Prieto-Blanco, 2016, pp. 144–145).

It is perhaps helpful here to note that my reflections are based on the work presented in this volume, as well as on my own practice as a visual sociologist engaging with questions of migration and visual mediations of (dis)affect and kinship. Thus, allow me to briefly introduce my research before offering raw extracts from my field-notes. I am deeply interested in the ways in which migrants employ visual means to stay in touch with geographically distant family members. In order to explore this, I worked with eleven Irish-Spanish families living in Ireland for over eighteen months. The research design incorporated elements of visual sociology (Becker, 1974; Harper, 2012; Pauwels, 2012; Pink, 2011, 2011a) and narrative inquiry (Bach, 2007; Bell, 2013; Squire, 1995). Importantly, it included an original three-stepped consent process; a circle of reference visualization (employed to surpass traditionally heteronormative categorizations of family, in the spirit of Weston,



Fig. 18.1 Circle of Reference Pablo and Mika. Pink = people considered to be family. Blue = people considered to be friends. Green = people considered to be acquaintances. The two pink pieces marked with an x represent each of the respondents. Left: people in their social circle. Middle: people Pablo and Mika share photographs with. Right: people Pablo and Mika share photographs with on a regular basis (at least once a month)

1997); and a visual tour of photographic displays at the families' homes. These enabled the elicitation of tacit and intersubjective knowledge about visual practices of mediation of (dis)affect. (Fig. 18.1)

The data demonstrated “that photographic exchanges generate third places of (dis)affect and intimacy where transnational families negotiate normative notions of kinship” (Prieto-Blanco, 2016, vii); and that “strategies of inclusion and exclusion implemented by these families impact the very concept of family (ibid.)” Overall, I argued that “digital photography is a medium of (inter)action and experience for transnational families (ibid.)” But what is more important to note here are the reflections on visual research methods and visual sociology, precipitated by a continuous ethnographic engagement with the families. Back then I asked myself, how can personal photography be discussed without incorporating something of ourselves into the text? (ibid., p.70). After engaging with the contributions in this volume and revisiting Azoulay’s work, I wonder, how can, indeed, photography at large be discussed, contemplated, work, without mobilising our inner selves in the process?

Azoulay’s civil contract of photography reclaims the act of being photographed as well as prolonged and engaged observations as ways to counteract the oppressive and colonial gaze of nation-states. Fardy proposes to understand this defiance of the traditional photographic system of representation “as an instance of civil disobedience” (2017, p. 185). Thus, participating in the citizenry of photography as takers, sharers, viewers, becomes a feasible option to connect humanly with distant peers “in a way that essentially escapes control” (Azoulay 2005, p. 39). Photographic citizens act together, they are bound by their defiance and their visible denunciations.

But, what does it mean then, choosing to remain invisible? Is it just about compliance? About obedience? And of more relevance for the readership here, how can visual researchers evidence violence and demand justice without putting individuals at risk?

Visual researchers, most notably visual sociologists, have long argued that images highlight the importance of participatory research practices and account for tacit and intersubjective knowledge (Becker, 1973, 2003; Loenhoff, 2011). However, much of the visual research produced since its onset prominently features people's faces, thereby unmistakably curtailing research participants' power by transforming them from active agents to objects of display. While this may respond to a call for "phenomenological sociology" (Harper, 1988, p. 1) as a way to deconstruct legitimated and naturalised narratives in order to make alternative ones visible (Bal, 2003, p. 22), I cannot avoid to wonder, is there a way to emplace narratives without imposing the burden of enduring presence onto research participants? I went back to my field-notes searching for answers.

"I am confronting my errors and talking in a very open way to Y today and while I consider this visit part of the field-work I have no intention of taking any photos or recording of our chat. I have the devices with me (...) but I need to focus first on re-connecting with Y. (...) Y had to pick up his/her child at the nursery so we walked and continued talking. (...) Back at home, the coziness of a cup of coffee shared over biscuits opened up a space of more concrete topics: my research, his/her participation. The child was having lunch and he/she also participated in our chat. I talked to the child and asked him/her about his/her friends, the summer in Spain and the food. A feeling of complicity was generated. I felt closer and freer. I felt I could count on Y again for the research. Y must have felt the same because she/he asked me then what she/he could do for me." (Field-notes, February, 2014).

Today, I have come to understand that every single research question is about the researcher's self, as much as about the field *out there*. While re-reading my field-notes, along with the passage above, I found others in which I reflected about the research process as it was taking place. Much of the discussion about visual research methods, in fact, has focused on what and how to do while in the field. But there are two other pieces missing in these debates. First, we ought to evaluate the ways in which data is processed and analyzed. As Frers rightly highlights, "[d]ata are also embodied memories" (Chap. 5, in this volume) and how we carry these around with us and within us, matters. Second, we need to reflect more on "the ways we present our studies" (Cambre, 2019). The life of research outputs and artefacts expands beyond what we are able to control. That is a fact. However, we have a choice on how to display the results of our investigations, and this choice determines our participants' *right to disappear* (Figs. 18.2 and 18.3).



Fig. 18.2 Photo object found in the field belonging to Yessica. Example of use of macro-lens to facilitate research participants' right to disappear



Fig. 18.3 Photo object found in the field belonging to Pablo and Mika. Example of use of framing, exposure and macro-lens to facilitate research participants' right to disappear

The concerns outlined above were part of the preparatory discussions to this volume, during which I proposed discussing *the right to disappear*. When articulating *the citizenry of photography*, Azoulay reported about a photographic encounter

between reporter Zvi Gilat from Israeli newspaper *Hadashot*,⁴ translator Amira Hassan, photographer Mikki Kratzam and Mrs. Abu-Zohir, who insisted in her rubber bullet wounds being photographed. “[H]er right to be photographed did not oblige anyone to see the photo (nor any editor to publish it). But she acted, nonetheless, as if it was her right to demand her photo to be taken, and everyone else’s duty to see it.” (2005, p. 39). This example clearly informs us of the manifold moments that occur in the civil contract of photography. *The right to be photographed* does not equal the right to disseminate the photograph. Agreeing to participate in photographic production is not a blank sheet for the resulting photographs to be shared at will. A tacit interpretation which implies otherwise would mean the perpetuation of oppression, and the further legitimization of “the process of “conquering the world as a picture”” (2005, p. 39). What does this mean for visual sociologists? How can our work ensure both granting participants *the right to be photographed*, as well as limiting it to the extent they are comfortable with? This is where in conversation with Nikielska-Sekula and Desille, *the right to disappear* emerged. It entails a profound and systematic approach to research ethics, which may be materialized by periods of prolonged observation, building of trust and rapport with participants, constant re-negotiation of the conditions of participation, fostering of reflective and evaluative thinking among participants and researchers working in partnerships, honest acknowledgment of mistakes, and the realisation that faces and other identifiable features, while aesthetically pleasing and alluring, may put participants at unnecessary risk.

In this volume, Nikielska-Sekula’s contribution clearly details how she honoured her participants’ right to disappear by not featuring people on the images produced as part of her research. Through the combination of participant observation, photo-voice and photo-elicitation, Augustová nurtured reflexive thinking and a critical appraisal of research among her participants, which resulted in an agreement to feature images “that did not contain any identifying features and those that the men assigned rigorous narratives” (Chap. 2, in this volume, p. 202). Honouring participants’ *right to disappear* should be seen as an extension of participatory research approaches (van den Riet, 2008; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008), as it clearly limits the power she, the researcher, had over the data, its dissemination and afterlife. The images produced as a result of honouring *the right to disappear* will not conform to dominant regimes of visibility. That is not what these images are made for. Instead, as visual sociologists, we aim to extend the partnership of the field and of the moment of photographing/being photographed, onto the moment of contemplation/spectatorship. We aim to do so not only as a way of waking up from the sluggishness of the spectacle (Debord, 1973), neither just to surpass the dichotomy of producer/viewer (Ranciere, 2009), but to being (dis) affectively involved at all levels. We aim to produce “images that require the labour of feeling with or through them” (Campt

⁴*Hadashot* was established in 1984 by Haaretz group as a left-wing anti-establishment newspaper. It became a bit more conservative with time, and finally shut down in 1993.

2019, p. 80), as *refusing* the paradigm of evidence, trace and externalisation, allows for intimate moments of connection to emerge even at a distance.

If I may, I'd like to finish this afterword with an image and the statement of an ongoing project of mine: transit. I believe it articulates most of the concerns outlined here, and while it still needs to grow, it is allowing me to test ways to honour active participation, refusal, and *the right to disappear*.

18.3 Transitions. Changes. Being on the Move. What Is That All About?

Trying to go back to spaces of the past is futile. Instead, nomadic-world-citizens wear their homes in their bodies. They transform meaningless spaces into places of intimate interaction. Thereby, they wander the world and are always at home. And abroad. At the same time. They are composites, assemblages on perpetual construction. (Fig. 18.4)

Fig. 18.4 Transit. 26. 3 years and 8 months



This body of work explores the transitions of two nomadic-world-citizens who left their country of origin several years ago. They have moved houses a few times. However, their search for home is still ongoing. Bringing together all the places where they have lived since they arrived on the green island is a way to become aware of their fractured, yet somehow connected identity. This in turn throws the ball back at you: when does a house become your home?

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