Chapter 1
Why We (Still) Need to Think and Write About Reflexivities in Migration Studies

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> To do social science research properly, one must be reflexive—no serious methodologist would honestly argue otherwise today. (Jonathan Dean, 2021, p. 178)
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> Feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges. (Donna Haraway, 1988, p. 581)
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> Les sociologies doivent convertir la réflexivité en une disposition constitutive de leur habitus scientifique, c'est-à-dire une réflexivité réflexe, capable d'agir non ex-post, sur l'opus operatum mais à priori, sur le modus operandi. (Pierre Bourdieu, 2001, p. 174)

These three quotes point to different facets of the topic which is the core of this volume, namely reflexivity and knowledge production. As the quotes reveal, no researcher today would question the necessity of reflexivity and the fact that knowledge is always situated. However, it often proves difficult to develop a disposition in the scientific habitus which allows for the incorporation of reflexivity in all its aspects, as Bourdieu has urged us to do. This is why we are still interested in these issues.

This book was probably born in January 2020, even if we did not know it at the time: 34 migration researchers from all over Europe met at the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland for the inaugural workshop of the newly-created IMISCOE Standing Committee on 'reflexivity in migration studies'. This new Standing Committee was an initiative that we (Andreas and Janine) had launched a couple of months before; we thought it was past time to initiate more reflections on reflexivity in the large network of migration scholars which IMISCOE represents. At this workshop, we opened with an initial comprehensive and collective debate on what

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J. Dahinden, A. Pott (eds.), *Reflexivities and Knowledge Production in Migration Studies*, IMISCOE Research Series,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-03337-6_1

reflexivity can mean and why we need it, particularly in migration studies. One of the most important outcomes of this workshop was our realisation that it would be more apt to speak of 'reflexivities', in the plural, and so we changed the name of this new Standing Committee: it turned out, not surprisingly, that migration researchers have very different ideas about what reflexivity can be, how reflexive research can be done, what functions and consequences a reflexive perspective can have for research, and where we might put the emphasis.

Exactly 3 years later, in January 2023, we held another workshop, this time at Chelsea Theatre in London;[1] it was attended by the authors of this volume, who by then were a group of committed researchers who had embarked together on a path of reflexivity, so to speak. Most had already attended the 2020 meeting along with a second one, a hybrid authors' workshop in Osnabrück in September 2021 (during the pandemic). In London, two main themes emerged from our discussions. First, we were struck by how fundamentally the debates in migration studies had shifted in this short time: within a few years, talking about and claiming 'reflexivity' had become mainstream, an inevitable obligation among migration scholars. This development is reflected in, for example, the fact that the IMISCOE Annual Conference 2024 was explicitly devoted to applying a reflexive perspective to migration. The 'reflexive turn' in migration studies, identified a decade ago by Nieswand and Drotbohm (2014), has led to a sharp increase in attention to issues of reflexivity and entanglement with our objects of research. This, of course, does not mean that critical or reflexive work has not been done before. Scholars had already pointed out problematic issues regarding knowledge production in migration studies prior to 2000, emphasising risks such as ethnicisation (Radtke, 1991; Bommes, 1996) or racism (Kalpaka & Räthzel, 1986; Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991). Later, a strong movement of critical scholars emerged, for example in Germany and France. While these scholars have not labelled themselves as 'reflexive', they undoubtedly contributed to current debates (among many Hess (2010) or Pécoud and Guchteneire (2007)). However, it has taken until the late 2010s when an acceleration and mainstreaming of discussions on reflexivity became apparent. So what does or could it mean to do migration research "after the reflexive turn" (Amelina, 2021)? What are the potentials and the limitations of reflexivity in and for migration studies? What is the role or complicity of migration research in view of re-/production of social and political power relations?

Second, our collective endeavour in London also raised a whole new set of questions about reflexivity which we had not discussed before. What role does the knowledge play produced by migration researchers—given that many other actors, such as statistical offices, police, social movements, private foundations, etc. also and increasingly produce knowledge about migration—and what does reflexivity mean in light of our participation in the societal co-production of migration-related knowledge? How can we reflexively engage with the diversity of actors—from the

[1] This meeting was hosted by the Public Dialogue Psychology Collaboratory, Open University Research Centre.

arts, media, politics, immigration officials, asylum seekers, and others—in order to improve our knowledge on migration? How can we, as academics, go beyond academia and make a difference in terms of knowledge on such an emotionally charged and politicised topical issue? How can we counteract the recent proliferation of authoritative knowledge about migration produced by non-academic actors and reduce what Amelung, Scheel and Van Reekum (2024) identified as a risk of marginalisation in the transdisciplinary field of migration-related knowledge production? As this array of unresolved questions suggests, many reasons remain for why we need to think, talk, and write about reflexivity in migration studies.

In this introduction, we lay out some basics concerning the function of reflexivity in research processes, particularly in migration studies. While we can probably all agree that reflexivity is needed to produce different—and hopefully more adequate, better, and more insightful—research and knowledge, the ways in which we understand and enact reflexivity in our everyday work as social scientists are not always so straightforward. In the first section, we draw on discussions of reflexivity in the broader social sciences and humanities, to highlight some fundamental issues of knowledge production. In the subsequent section, we then consider how and why reflexivity has entered migration studies, discussing particular pitfalls migration studies face in the production of knowledge. Finally, we show how our book contributes to this debate, as well as what remains to be done. In other words, we propose a programmatic approach to the issue of reflexivity and knowledge production that addresses migration studies in general.

Before we will outline our arguments, we would like to emphasise two points:

First, we would like to clarify from which perspective this volume has been written. It is important to note that all the authors of the contributions—migranticised and non-migranticised colleagues—are affiliated with universities or research institutions in Western or Central Europe. We incorporate this positionality while attempting to reflect on its consequences and while opening up other perspectives on the topics in question. This particular positionality is mirrored in the fact that our authors reflect on knowledge production primarily within their own European contexts while being embedded transnationally and, at times, globally. The contributing scholars come from institutional contexts where specific material and structural conditions both enable and limit the production of knowledge on migration in particular ways, where they must confront the legacies of exclusionary (or racist) practices, where we observe a marriage between politics and scholarship, and where there is significant self-referentiality and epistemic community building, among others. We believe, however, that making this positionality visible is instructive as it is clearly reflected in the contributions which give important insights into current debates in European migration studies.

Second, we would like to add some words about how we use the terms critical, radical, and reflexive. We are aware that in different European contexts and beyond, these terms carry a variety of meanings. At times, they are contested by scholars, they might be mobilised to draw boundaries within various fields of scholarship, and often they are simply not critically examined. In certain European contexts,

such as Germany and France, there is a strong tradition of scholars identifying themselves as critical or radical scholars and contributing significantly to knowledge production in the field. This body of work has provided us with valuable insights for writing this introduction and the volume. However, we have chosen to focus on reflexivity here, as this concept has a long history in social sciences. Building on this history we will subsequently develop our understanding of reflexivity more thoroughly.

1.1 Four Key Approaches to Reflexivity and Knowledge Production in the Social Sciences

Both reflexivity as a scholarly practice and reflexivity as something to talk, write, and theorise about are of course not new to the social sciences (and humanities) as such; on the contrary, there is a long history of references to reflexivity and knowledge production in various social science disciplines (for an overview, see Marguin et al., 2021). Historically, debates on reflexivity have been strongly rooted in philosophy, sociology, and anthropology, as well as in feminist and postcolonial studies. In empirical research, reflexivity has been discussed primarily in relation to qualitative research. Overall, there are two closely connected understandings in scholarship. First, reflexivity is seen as closely intertwined with questions of knowledge production, such as 'for whom' and 'for what purpose' we produce 'what kind of knowledge' and 'under what power configurations'. This scholarship is highly influenced by Foucault's theorisation of the power-knowledge complex (Foucault, 1972, 1978; see also Dieterich and Nieswand, Chap. 5, in this volume). Second, reflexivity has an important function as a heuristic device which informs the whole research process, including research questions, access to the field, interactions in the field, (co)production of data, data analysis, dissemination, and wider public engagement (Dean, 2017). It is beyond the scope of this introduction to trace the genealogy of reflexivity or to give a history of theories of knowledge production; rather, we present four different theoretical strands—those which seem (to us) to be the most important ones for the field of migration studies.

The first and most prominent strand can be subsumed under the umbrella of *positionality*. Following Marguin et al. (2021, p. 10) heuristically, we can distinguish different layers of positionality, which are closely intertwined and separated only for the sake of analysis into positionality in relation to (1) oneself (the researcher), (2) the research object (and research participants), and (3) social structures and institutions.

The first layer of positionality concerns the researchers' *subjectivity and biographical experiences* and their capacity for a reflexive relationship to the self, life, and the world—in other words, the self-reflexivity of the researching subjects. In the words of Knoblauch (2021, p. 70), "there is a subjective dimension of the researcher as an individuated, embodied, sensual and knowledgeable actor."

Biographical experiences have been shown to play an important role in the scientific process, as they link social scientists to their object, at times in tension; hence, they need to be reflected on (Clair, 2022). For example, Paugam (2008, p. 18) demonstrates that the researcher's motivation to work on a particular subject is never trivial and is closely related to biographical experiences, thus requiring distancing and reflexivity.

Related to this point is the second layer, what is today often discussed under the label of *intersectional positionality*. Many debates revolve around the question of 'insider–outsider' dichotomies (between researchers and research participants, see below) and the reflexive gaze required in the face of unequal power relations, which may arise throughout the entire process of planning, conducting, or analysing research (Mayer, 1995; Hammersley, 2006; Müller, 2015; Dean, 2021). In this sense, reflexivity has been assigned a crucial function in the empirical social sciences: to address the influence of unequal power relations in the relationship between researcher and researched, as expressed in Bourdieu's (1993a, p. 905) idea of symbolic violence.

The third layer of positionality concerns the *social structures and institutional orders* in which researchers are embedded. Reflexivity has the important function of rendering the researcher aware of their position and positioning, which pervades their production of knowledge theoretically, methodologically, and thematically (Dean, 2017). The work of Bourdieu (2001, pp. 173–175) on self-sociological analysis is a good example of theorising this layer of positionality: Bourdieu understands reflexivity as a methodological procedure in terms of "*objectiver le sujet de l'objectivation*" (ibid., p. 173), applying one's analytical tools to the reflexive analysis of one's own work. He distinguishes three configurations which deserve reflexive analysis: the social space of researchers, their position within the academic field, and their position within the scholastic universe. Put differently, researchers are always embedded in cultural and scientific traditions, and so reflexivity needs to involve a constitutive disposition of their scientific habitus, in order to objectify their relation to the research object; in this way, researchers can become aware of their positionality and perspectives, which underlie their production of knowledge (Bourdieu, 2003).

The second theoretical strand is followed by scholars who offer an *epistemological approach* to questions of reflexivity and knowledge production. An important contribution includes sociological theories of differentiation and observation, as developed and applied by Luhmann and others (Luhmann, 1993; Bommes, 2012). Drawing on the epistemology of Spencer-Brown (1979) and on the research on second-order cybernetics of von Foerster (1982) and others, the reflexivity in these theories refers to an operation called *observing*, meaning the simultaneous practice of differentiating and naming. Since all observation is system-specific, observations always refer to and are limited by contextual opportunities, expectations, and constraints (whether the observing system is the senses of an individual, an organisation, or a scientific community). For example, organisations observe their environment and produce decisions and knowledge according to their formal programmes, organisational routines, and "institutional habitus" (Affolter, 2021); that

is why municipal administrations (a specific type of organisation) recruit and employ staff according to their own premises, needs, and ways of observing urban change (Lang, 2019). Observing other observers' use of differentiations—called second-order observation—radicalises constructivist approaches. At the level of second-order observing, the mobilisation of distinctions (such as migrant/non-migrant) and the underlying logic of selecting particular distinctions—and not others—can be analysed. Both the contingency of the use of distinctions (or, in other words, of boundary-making; Wimmer, 2013) and the processes and mechanisms of stabilisation become apparent. By emphasising how knowledge and knowledge production is observer-dependent, sociological theories of differentiation and observation specify the boundedness of knowledge. This applies to all knowledge and all knowledge producers, and so also to researchers. In addition, this line of thinking raises awareness of researchers' responsibility for the distinctions they use (i.e., for the questions they ask, the data they construct or use, the actors they engage with, etc.).

With regard to the third strand, an important discussion on reflexivity revolves around questions of the *situatedness of knowledge and its relation to power.* Various origins can be traced. One origin goes back to social anthropology, which underwent a paradigmatic 'reflexive turn' in the 1980s and 1990s that coincided with a crucial crisis of representation. Scholars not only theorised the constructed nature of knowledge and began to emphasise its entanglement with power: they also began to fundamentally question the authority of the anthropologist's voice, not least by reflecting on the discipline's involvement in colonial and imperial projects (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Abu-Lughod, 1991). Importantly, and more generally, in this context concepts such as self-reflexivity are also used to point to critiques of ethnocentrism and universalism. Another origin of this debate is feminist scholarship, which has contributed concepts such as 'situated knowledge' and a plea for the inclusion of marginalised voices in knowledge production (Haraway, 1988). Sandra Harding (1992) suggests the concept of 'strong objectivity' to describe how acknowledging one's own perspective does not undermine but rather enhances the aspired objectivity of a scientific enterprise. The central concept of this feminist epistemology is that of a situated knower and, hence, of situated knowledge–knowledge which reflects the particular perspectives of the subject. In other words, these discussions brought questions of power into debates on reflexivity in terms of a critical-reflexive analysis of Western knowledge production, ethnocentric and androcentric ways of thinking, and the resulting world-societal asymmetries reflected in academia. Some of those fundamental questions, which are still relevant today, include: Who speaks? Who writes? When and where? About whom, with whom, and for whom? Under what historical and institutional constraints? This critical perspective on the situatedness of knowledge has been taken up and continues to be programmatically advanced by post- and decolonial approaches (Spivak, 1988; Bhambra, 2014; Connell, 2017), whose aim to decolonise social science research is closely intertwined with questions of reflexivity and knowledge production (see also below).

Finally, for the fourth strand, we include scholarship which has extended reflexivity to consider the ability of actors outside of academia (including research

participants) to critically reflect on their own situations (Lash, 1993) and thus to contribute to knowledge production. For example, research participants can produce situated knowledge in the sense of standpoint theory. This capacity for *reflexivity in (research) participants* is important because it enables intersubjective knowledge production. Of course, such knowledge needs to be 'unpacked', because research participants are socially situated such that they see different things and ask different questions than researchers. At times, such co-production of knowledge might appear problematic—if, for instance, researchers and research participants present differences in political opinions or fundamentally divergent views of the world. Some scholars argue that the reflexivity of participants and the reflexivity of researchers are mutually constitutive and produce scientific knowledge which is potentially co-constructed (Dahinden et al., 2021). This line of discussion is a fruitful way of looking at participatory research approaches, and it also raises new questions which are particularly relevant to the field of migration: with this perspective, the distinction between scientific knowledge and other kinds of knowledge—of research participants, politicians, artists, experts, etc.—cannot be taken for granted (a point we will come back to later).

In short, as Drotbohm (Chap. 17, in this volume) puts it, we might understand reflexivity on this very general level "as a mandatory exercise that reveals the standpoint-bound nature of research by explicating who is (re)searching (what subject position does the researcher(s) occupy?), how (with what means, tools or perspectives?), why (with what interests, goals, theoretical or political underpinnings?), for whom (who benefits from this research?), and on what (how is the object of research constituted, what positions are involved in its determination?)."

1.2 Reflexivity and Knowledge Production in Migration Studies: Contested Fields

In what ways does the debate on reflexivity in migration studies build on these insights, and how did the many-faceted debate in the wider social sciences enter migration studies in the first place?

There is no doubt that what other social science disciplines have discussed in terms of reflexivity and knowledge production also applies to migration studies. The common umbrella to which the contributions of this volume refer is, *grosso modo,* an understanding of reflexivity as the recursive epistemic work which is invested in explicating, understanding, and explaining the tacit implications and effects of social relations and positionalities with regard to the production and application of knowledge (Dieterich and Nieswand, Chap. 5, this volume). At the same time, it should be emphasised that in the field of migration studies, some aspects of discussion stand out especially clearly, although they concern social sciences in general; these are put at the centre of the following sub-sections. In particular, four crucial aspects are elaborated, cutting across the levels we have introduced so far:

categorisations and concepts; co-production of knowledge on migration; intersectional positionality; and geopolitics of knowledge production.

1.2.1 Problematic Epistemological Underpinnings of Migration Studies: Categorisations and Concepts

A large share of the debates on reflexivity has entered migration studies through a particular channel, namely the fundamental scrutinising of the positionality of migration studies itself in terms of its epistemological underpinnings, categorisations, and concepts. Reflexivity is here a tool (in a Bourdieusian sense) with which to take migration studies as the object of study and to investigate how this field is embedded in societal normalised power structures and how it runs the risk of reproducing those structures. Liisa Malkki (1992) was probably one of the first to emphasise that the "national order of things" is not only baked into everyday language but is also often implicit in the work of scholars doing research in the field of migration. Similarly, more than 20 years ago Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2002) showed how methodological nationalism is closely entangled with migration studies: they highlight that the assumption that the nation/state/society triplet is the natural social and political form of the modern world is characteristic of most scholarly work of migration studies. Both of these seminal articles scrutinise the work 'migration' does in terms of (ongoing) nation-building, and both point to fundamental problems in knowledge production in the field of migration studies (and in social sciences more generally), namely the risk that scholars reproduce in their work a nation-state logic and a (national) container conception of society—and thus hegemonic, racialised, migranticised, and nationalised forms of inclusion/exclusion and power. Another related critique which has been voiced more recently is directed at the ahistorical theory-building seen in migration studies, pointing out how historical legacies of current migration regimes are often ignored. As several studies have shown, current migration movements and mobility regimes are (at least partially) built on historical connections generated by nation-building, colonialism, imperialism, appropriation, dispossession, and de-colonisation—connections which are often dismissed in migration studies and beyond (Erel et al., 2016; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; Tudor, 2018; Krause, 2021; Mayblin & Turner, 2021; Palmary, 2021). It is obvious that neither methodological nationalism nor ahistoricism are limited to migration studies; these critiques concern social sciences and social theory more generally (Beck, 2002).

In short, over the past three decades, a wide range of scholarship has addressed the positionality of migration studies in itself, its use and reproduction of nation-state and colonial categorisations, and the inherent risk in this field of research of reproducing dominant power structures of difference, othering, and inequality. We can provide only a glimpse of this vast and ongoing debate here, but we highlight some of the areas which have been discussed most prominently.

An important line of this reflexive research tackles the question of migration-related *categorisations and concepts* by examining the ways in which they relate to the logics of the nation-state and coloniality, elaborating on their historicity and showing the work these categorisations do in terms of power and exclusion (Gillespie et al., 2012; Menjívar, 2023). For instance, some researchers have argued that the category 'migrant' is not only normatively and politically influenced but also deeply anchored in—and the result of—a nation-state logic, and that therefore 'migrants' tend to be perceived as racialised, poor, and subordinated people whose movements or presence are problematic and thus warrant state control (Römhild, 2014; Dahinden, 2016; De Genova, 2017; Anderson, 2019; Amelina, 2022; Scheel & Tazzioli, 2022, among many). Tudor (2018, p. 1058) speaks of "migratism" to point to the power relation which ascribes migration to certain bodies and which establishes non-migration as the norm of national and European belonging. In a similar vein, Dahinden (2025) introduces the idea of technologies of migranticisation: the distinction between migrants and (non-migrant) citizens is fundamentally anchored in the nation-state logic, and migranticisation can be considered a technology of power and governance, as it places certain people (those labelled migrants, second-generation migrants, people with a migration background, etc.) in a distinct hierarchy which dovetails with an unequal distribution of symbolic and material resources. Migranticisation is seen, e.g., in the fact that in the political rhetoric in the European Union, the term 'mobility' is reserved for Europeans—so-called expats and retired people—while 'migration' is associated with 'third countries' and unqualified people (often from the so-called Global South); this reproduces normative political categories of desired and undesired migrants while creating hierarchies between 'us' and 'them' (Faist, 2013; Kunz, 2019). As one of our authors, Mazzucato (Chap. 12, in this volume) contributes to this debate by analytically using the category 'mobility' instead of 'migration'; her contribution on young people's international and intranational mobilities is embedded in the attempts of many scholars to bring insights from the "mobility turn" (Urry, 2007; Cresswell, 2010) into migration studies, in order to counteract the implicit nation-state logic of 'migration'-related categorisations (Wyss & Dahinden, 2022). Mahendran (Chap. 14, also in this volume) adopts a similar strategy: she introduces the corresponding concepts of a migration-mobility continuum and of mixed migration-mobility-couples—again, in order to de-naturalise nation-state categorisations in her research.

Such a reflexive approach towards categorisations has also been applied to other migration-related categories. For instance, scholars have scrutinised the political consequences of the labels 'refugee' (Zetter, 1991), 'guest worker' (Rass, 2023), 'migration background' (Horvath, 2019), and 'undocumented migrant' (Reinecke, 2018). They also examined the work 'culture' does in contested migration contexts in terms of exclusion (Stolcke, 1995; Dahinden & Korteweg, 2023) and of particular "spatializations of migration" (Pott, 2018). Using the example of family-related categories, Andrikopoulos (Chap. 15, in this volume) points to the problematic consequences that occur when researchers rely on and reproduce (nation-)state categories and legal definitions such as 'family' or 'marriage'; the implication is that ethnocentrism and normative ideas are reproduced in scholarly work and,

consequently, also nation-state forms of exclusion. Particularly prominent in migration studies is a reflexive approach to the concept of 'integration'; scholarship shows the hegemonic connotations and the production of gendered and racialised (national) (non-)belonging that occurs through 'integration' (Korteweg, 2017; Schinkel, 2018; Favell, 2022; Dodevska, 2023; Manser-Egli, 2023, among many). Crul and Lelie (Chap. 11, in this volume) make an innovative contribution to this debate: they turn the integration-related gaze upside down and suggest investigating the power of white people without a migration background and the societal outcomes thereof in diversified urban contexts. While the subject of integration is generally migranticised and racialised people, Crul and Lelie propose changing the unit of analysis by focusing on those who are never subject to integration policy nor to integration discourses.

This contribution is also an example of how a reflexive approach offers an alternative avenue which allows production of knowledge in the field to be disentangled from a nation-state logic and coloniality.[2] Similarly, scholars suggest to "denaturalize the national" in research (Amelina & Faist, 2012) and to "de-ethnicize" (Glick Schiller et al., 2006) or "de-migranticize" research (Dahinden, 2016). Concepts of "critical spatial thinking" (Samers & Collyer, 2017), ideas of "methodological denationalism" (Anderson, 2019), and critical race theory (Meghji, 2022; Tudor, 2023), among others, were brought into the debate. Khazaei (Chap. 9, in this volume) provides an example which illustrates this body of scholarship: she mobilises critical race theory to show how what she calls the "racial order of things" can be addressed in migration studies.

1.2.2 Knowledge Society and the Co-Production of Knowledge on Migration Beyond Academia

A second peculiarity of the field of migration studies is that in Europe, it has often emerged in close relation to migration policy; at times, migration studies has been part of nation-state migration apparatuses (see Ponzoni, Ghorashi and Rast, Chap. 3, in this volume), and to this day, in several European countries migration studies are still strongly influenced by political agendas. Although the way these entanglements play out differ considerably across European countries (Bommes & Thränhardt, 2010), what they have in common is that the boundary between academic knowledge and other types of knowledge has been blurred from the onset. This 'marriage' between migration policy and migration research is one of the reasons why the field is struggling with ethno- and nation-centred epistemologies and concepts, hence the problems raised in the previous section. Migration policy in

[2] For more examples of alternative modes of knowledge production on migration see the contributions of the Special Issue "Towards Reflexivity in the Study of Mobility and Diversity" in *Migration Studies*, 2025.

Europe (as we know it today) emerged in the course of the modern nation- and welfare-state-building, when simultaneous mobility regimes were nationalised (Wimmer, 2002; Sharma, 2020). Nation-states became, historically speaking, the first type of state to have a monopoly on mobility, now called migration (Mongia, 1999, p. 544). Furthermore, in the nation-state logic, migration becomes the exception and a problem (Hui, 2016), as it violates the rule of imagined sedentariness within the boundaries of the nation-state (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002, p. 310). Once migration and migrants were defined as a 'problem', it was obvious that experts were needed to address it—and these could and can be found in universities.

Consequently, it is not surprising that migration studies, and knowledge about migration in general, have attracted considerable attention from outside academia, particularly in the media and in policy-making (Boswell, 2009; Scholten et al., 2015). It is no exaggeration to say that "migration is on everyone's mind": it is one of the issues which has been at the top of the political agenda in most European countries for several decades. In population-wide surveys, migration regularly emerges as a field of concern. Furthermore, migration is instrumentalised by right-wing parties and politicians for nationalist purposes, as we can again see in many European countries. In this context of widespread societal attention to migration, of diversification of migration-related knowledge production, and of growing influence of knowledge about migration produced by non-academic actors, migration scholars act as media experts, knowledge-brokers, translators, or policy consultants in a wide range of thematic fields. As a result, knowledge about migration is both diverse and produced in multiple ways—which distinguishes it from purely scientific 'disciplinary' knowledge production (if there is such a thing).

The blurring of the distinctiveness of scientific knowledge is a general pattern of ongoing social change: we live in a knowledge society, where more and more people, organisations, and institutions are concerned with the knowledge of others and where the status of academic knowledge is no longer clear. In addition, the scientification of society that we have witnessed since the twentieth century is accompanied by an increasing permeation of scientific knowledge into previously non-scientific areas, including politics, religion, education, sport, and more (Knoblauch, 2021, p. 62). While all academic disciplines and social systems are facing these transformations, the situation in the field of migration is particularly virulent: given the political and social topicality of the issue, the increasing scientification of society has resulted in scientific terms, designations, concepts, and methods playing a central role in the observation, ordering, and interpretation of migration. We can thus assume that the societal negotiation of migration is, at least to some extent, based on the production of scientific knowledge. In addition to expert reports (by researchers), scientific evaluations and quantifications (e.g., in statistics) as well as visualisations like cartographic representations of movements can contribute to the knowledge on migration (Van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2019). Increasingly, datafication—i.e., the translation into computerised data—also plays a role in the production of migration-related knowledge (e.g., Dijstelbloem et al., 2011; Ajana, 2015).

In other words, migration knowledge is produced, utilised and contested in various contexts, with academic migration research being just one of them. As migration-related knowledge is continuously translated, condensed, and transformed in exchanges among a diverse range of individual, collective, and institutional actors, we should assume complex processes of co-production at work. But how can these processes be analysed through a reflexive perspective? Bartels, Schäfer and Stielike (Chap. 4, in this volume) remind us that producing knowledge on the production of knowledge is both necessary and challenging, requiring what they call "double reflexivity". Bearing this in mind, Fischer's description (Chap. 13, in this volume) of how knowledge about "the dangerous migrant other" is produced in public and political discourses by mobilising stereotypical images is just one part of the analysis. She also shows that scholars have the conceptual and methodological means to engage in analysis of the circumstances which produce such problematic discursive figures of 'the migrant', thus facilitating attempts to transform or at least to supplement the common-sense public knowledge. Similarly, Ponzoni, Ghorashi and Rast (Chap. 3, also in this volume) describe a critically-engaged qualitative methodology and its possible contribution to transforming existing knowledge about 'refugees': through co-creative engagement with diverse stakeholders (who all have their own knowledge on refugees), alternative forms of knowledge emerge, which can enable new forms of inclusion.

As various examples demonstrate, the scientific production and circulation of knowledge about migration—of concepts, data, and interpretations—can impact the formulation and implementation of migration and integration policies (Boswell, 2009; Kratzer, 2021). The ways different actors negotiate the meaning of migration also depend on and are influenced by this knowledge (Brubaker, 2013; Mügge & Van der Haar, 2016). Nevertheless, knowledge transfers and translations into other institutional, social, or spatial contexts are often accompanied by modifications of this knowledge and the associated orders of knowledge (e.g., Jasanoff, 2004; Neumann & Nünning, 2012). The many crossings and interrelations pique the interest of Schneider (Chap. 10, in this volume) in the intersections between social sciences, politics, and cultural production when it comes to knowledge production. He looks at the concept of ' post-migration' he traces the trajectory of this term from its origins in theatre production in Germany to other social fields, including migration studies and political activism, and he points to transformations in its meanings, to its role in the production of knowledge about migration, and to its concrete impact in academia.

All the above calls for more rigorous reflection on the knowledge production of migration research, and of its multiple interrelations with other social systems and actors.

1.2.3 Intersectional Positionality of Migration Researchers and Asymmetrical Power Relations

An important area of discussion where reflexivity comes into play concerns what we labelled above as the intersectional positionalities of migration researchers. While the 'insider–outsider' dichotomy (i.e., are researchers a part of the 'community' they are researching or not?) dominated earlier discussions, today's debate is more complex. Current reflections revolve primarily around the various challenges arising from the peculiar configuration of the field of migration research, which creates asymmetrical power relations between researchers and participants. Such asymmetrical power relations are of course a fundamental feature of any qualitative research, but in the field of migration studies, these issues are accentuated. We can say that there is a clear imbalance, at least in Europe: current migration research primarily looks at 'migrants' (and their children) instead of, e.g., 'non-migrants' or societal contexts. While migranticised and racialised people are observed and become the research 'subjects'—thereby becoming 'the data'—the researchers are mostly 'white' and/or 'non-migranticised', although this structure is slowly changing. This particular pattern of migration research in many European countries can be understood as an outcome of wider inequalities and power relations in European societies and universities, related to processes of racialisation, ethnicisation, and migranticisation as well as to the ways in which these processes operate in and through borders, citizenship, and regimes of migration, integration, and security to produce inequalities. There are important differences between the different historical national contexts within Europe, which need to be taken into account. For example, the ways that the meanings of race, culture, the migrant, minorities, or 'the other' have imbued different European contexts vary depending on the historical specificities of each nation-building process, on different historical legacies (colonial, imperial, other), and/or on different models of immigration, such as those based on the idea of 'guest workers', immigration from former colonies, or 'new immigrants'. Nevertheless, imbalances are prevalent throughout Europe and are linked to complex power dynamics. The geopolitical aspects of this pattern in the production of knowledge in migration studies will be discussed below; here, we focus on the asymmetrical power relations which this pattern creates in the field and on how reflexivity comes into play.

Scholarship shows that reflexivity helps unsettle the complex dynamics which characterise such research relationships. Perhaps the most important issue is that recent reflections have challenged the epistemological and methodological distinction between 'outsiders' and 'insiders' in qualitative research, suggesting that we instead think in terms of *intersectional positionalities* (in the plural), which are the result of self-positioning strategies together with the ways in which researchers are positioned by others in the field. We summarise this ongoing debate in four points.

First, while discussions of positionality are at times reduced to a reflexive consideration of one or two of the researcher's demographic characteristics (such as shared race/ethnicity or gender), more recent debates have complicated this issue by

bringing in intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1994; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006). At first glance, 'matching' a sample with respect to one or two demographic categories might appear to be a way out of asymmetrical power relations, in that racialised researchers do research on/with racialised people within their so-called 'own' community. However, such efforts have significant theoretical and empirical drawbacks (Mayer, 1995): they do not take into account the intersectional nature of positionality, nor the constructed nature of 'groups', group boundaries, or 'communities' (Brubaker, 2004; Dahinden, 2008; Wimmer, 2009); rather, they reinforce and naturalise racialised and ethnicised boundaries. As a result, such efforts risk essentialising categories (such as nationality, race, place, gender, ethnicity, migration) and thus contributing to and reinforcing othering and the structures of inequality which characterise societies (Müller, 2015). Taking intersectional positionalities seriously, Reyes (2020) highlights how all researchers—not just those who are marginalised—draw on tools in their methodological toolkits, which consist of researchers' visible (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender) and invisible (e.g., social or class capital) tools. With their own particular toolkits, researchers are encouraged to think (intersectionally) about how their social positions and forms of capital can be used strategically and how these guide the way we navigate and understand the field.

Second, and related to the first point, migranticised or racialised people are probably likely to have a different—and at times 'reversed'—gaze, and they encounter different experiences in the field from non-migranticised or non-racialised researchers (Hoong Sin, 2007). However, as Khazaei (2019, pp. 57–61) argues, "being categorized as a 'migrant' and having different experiences from of a native and non-migrant researcher cannot be automatically assumed to be an epistemic privilege […] but this could create a space in which specific experiences constitute a vantage point that render such understandings more readily accessible." In other words, researchers always produce positional and partial truths, regardless of whether the researcher is a person from a so-called 'majority' or 'minority' group, but these "truths" differ, since there is no such thing as "non-situated knowledge". Researchers have to learn how to use their position and the opportunities which come with such a positioning as a source of critical insights in investigating how society is structured (Khazaei, 2019).

Third, positionalities are not only self-proclaimed: they are also the result of *external ascriptions, categorisations,* and *external positioning*. Researchers are constantly situated in and during empirical work, which impacts not only their access to the field and data but also their relations in the field. Khazaei (2019, pp. 59–60) shows that being perceived as a migrant woman from Iran in Switzerland and working on domestic violence clearly impacted what she could and could not observe and which kinds of discourse she was able to gather. Similarly, Manser-Egli (2023, p. 4) points to the fact that while doing research in Swiss bureaucratic institutions, he was identified by his interlocutors as having a "typical Swiss name" and as being white, not migranticised and male: as such, he was, as he puts it, "naturally included in the 'we' as in 'our culture', 'our democracy', 'our mentality' and in the 'us' as in 'do these people live like us? […] The narratives, and as such the data itself and the analysis it substantiates, would certainly have been different had I

been perceived and addressed differently in terms of social markers and positionalities." These two experiences show that categories of 'insider' and 'outsider' are not really helpful for analysing what is happening in terms of positionalities; rather, it might be more fruitful to think in terms of positionalities as an entanglement of self- and external categorisations and, as Reyes (2020) proposes, as visible and invisible toolkits. Of course, reflexivity in terms of taking intersectional positionalities seriously goes far beyond what Bourdieu (2001, p. 178) called "*la réfléxivité narcissique*". We see this at times today when researchers, in the methodology section of their publication, shortly—and like a religious confession—point to their skin colour and gender in terms of positionality, while later on neglecting these issues all throughout the analysis (see also, Chap. 16, in this volume, the conversation between Ali Konyali and Yolanda Hernández-Albújar addressing this problem). In this case, reflexivity risks becoming tokenised and obscuring more than it brings to light. Or, as Gani and Khan (2024) argue, in fact, positionality statements can—in hierarchical contexts as we have them in Europe—even exacerbate power relations instead of burying them. The crucial question is: What are the rewards of being reflexive and making positionalities visible? Positionality statements can have the function to assert the researcher's critical credentials. They have the capacity to "provide legitimacy, redemption, and an assertion of power for the white researcher in relation to PoC" (Gani & Khan, 2024, p. 10) or to migranticised people. According to the authors, racialised individuals cannot rely on positionality credentials in the same way as those racialised as white, due to the hierarchical patterns that structure the field of academia. Ultimately, the search for absolution through positionality statements places the burden on a racialised or migranticised audience to grant that absolution as an act of generosity.

Fourth, the last important facet of this discussion on reflexivity and asymmetrical power relations in the field concerns the positioning of migranticised or racialised researchers when they do research in this field. As stated above, such researchers are still a minority, and it poses many challenges. Jashari (Chap. 2, in this volume) theorises the ambivalences of being a migranticised migration researcher as someone "having joined the table" while still being "on the menu" (Bilge, 2020); her contribution discusses what happens when 'writing migrants' (by this she means migranticised scholars doing migration research) enter migration studies and some of the hidden, naturalised structural traits shaping migration studies become visible. Similarly, Hernández-Albújar and Konyali (Chap. 16, in this volume) speak about a division of labour between insiders and outsiders and how some people (e.g., migranticised researchers) are considered suitable for certain contexts but not for others.

To conclude, reflexivity can function as a tool to disentangle very complex power relations as they unfold during field work—power relations which link the empirical research activity to wider societal processes. As such a tool, reflexivity should facilitate the generation of more insightful data.

1.2.4 Geopolitics of Knowledge Production in Migration Studies: Situatedness of Knowledge and Its Relation to Power and Inequalities

Similar to the debates in various other disciplines (as briefly mentioned above), an important area of discussion on reflexivity in migration studies also targets the situatedness of knowledge and its relation to power. Migration scholars have increasingly used reflexivity to rethink the Euro- and US-centrism of migration studies in terms of an "epistemic decolonialization of migration theory" (Grosfoguel et al., 2015, p. 646; Kosnick, 2021). Briefly, the main critique is that academic studies of and responses to migration are dominated by scholarship produced in the so-called Global North; this presumably leads to various 'blind spots' and the hegemony of certain discursive frames of reference, with certain issues (such as migration policy or integration) and certain directions and forms of migration (such as South–North migrations) dominating the agenda (Bommes & Morawska, 2005; Bakewell, 2008; Pisarevskaya et al., 2019). Broadly speaking, this debate—which is highly fragmented and complex—raises the question of the geopolitics of knowledge production as part and parcel of migration studies. Here, reflexivity becomes a means with which to think about how to address dominant forms of knowledge production on a global scale and how to move towards more inclusive and diverse forms of collaboration and mutual reflection; it becomes a tool for thinking about global power relations, how they are reproduced through the structures of this academic field, and how they might be transformed.

It is beyond the scope of this introduction to trace all the nuances of this debate, but we address the main points. First, some scholars, such as Caldeira (2000, p. 10), argue that knowledge from the Global South is often treated as indigenous information, as data, and is not given the same status as knowledge produced in the 'international' (read: Global North) style and published in the international language (i.e., English). Second, some scholars have begun to explore the applicability of migration studies' classical concepts and frameworks to case studies of the Global South, in order to better locate knowledge production and clearly delimit its scope; others have studied South–South migration in order to address blind spots in US and European migration studies, which primarily focus on South–North mobilities. However, such approaches are sometimes criticised: they are seen as a continuation of normative and hegemonic research traditions (developed in the Global North) which are still deeply embedded in forms of coloniality of knowledge (Quijano, 2000). Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2020, p. 6), for example, argues that such approaches are problematic because they aim to fill a knowledge gap—in a manner similar to the well-known "add women and stir" approaches in feminist studies, which proved counterproductive—rather than question what is constituted and considered as knowledge in the first place. This strand of reflexive thinking thus advocates addressing the question of how to academically engage with a genuine 'decentring' or 'recentring' of migration research and knowledge from the Global North. Suggestions include the "provincialisation" of European and Eurocentric

knowledge systems which are claimed to be "universal", as this denies or marginalises the existence of 'non-European' or 'non-Western' forms of knowledge (Chakrabarty, 2000; Connell, 2017). Boatcă (2021), for example, suggests shifting the geographical gaze to see Europe through "Caribbean eyes". A common frame of the current debates seems to be that the idea of 'centre' and of 'us' and 'them' has been multiplied; indeed, it has been suggested to understand the idea of 'centre' in a relational way, and thus to postulate multiple 'us' and 'them' (beyond the 'Global South' and the 'Global North') (Fiddan-Qasmiyeh, 2020, p. 8). Therefore, decentring the dominant gaze needs to take into account the relational and situated character of knowledge production: Whose words count, how much, and where? What does it mean to "give a voice" beyond treating people's words and narrations like data?

Various contributions in our volume are anchored in and contribute to these debates. Bastia and Kofman, for example, investigate the consequences of geographically-unequal knowledge production by examining the hegemony of English and the consequences thereof in teaching and research; they use a feminist and spatial lens to question these inequalities and propose alternatives. Schmoll (Chap. 8, also in this volume) asks a similar question, but considers the Francophone space and reflects on the paradoxes of France and French research as the core of a marginalised (former) empire. Sondhi and Raghuram (Chap. 6, in this volume), for their part, address the danger of decolonisation becoming tokenistic; the absence of the discussion of who, where, and how to decolonise migration studies cannot continue if the aim is to move beyond rhetorical decolonisation.

We believe that these debates, which highlight global inequalities and historical legacies in knowledge production and which aim to transform academia and its power relations, are crucial to the future of migration studies (and social sciences in general). However, another important question arises: What are the limits of reflexivity in the study of social inequalities and power relations? Dean (2021, p. 182) cautions against placing too much emphasis on the emancipatory potential of researchers being reflexive in the study of social inequalities. Indeed, following his ideas, we argue that if we understand reflexivity as a methodological tool and the aim of reflexivity as enabling contingency- and power-sensitive social science, then reflexivity may reach its limit at triggering social change. In other words, reflexivity allows migration studies, migration researchers and their ideas, theories, and methodologies to be positioned so that different and more rigorous knowledge can be produced, but it may not be a tool for bringing about social change.

1.3 Ongoing Pitfalls and Limitations of Reflexivity in Migration Studies

What are the ongoing challenges that migration researchers face when trying to think about and practice reflexivity, and what are limitations of reflexivities? We have already mentioned some of these in the previous sections, and in the following, we attempt to gather the most significant challenges—although there may be others—as well as briefly discuss the limitations of reflexivity.

Two important pitfalls of reflexivity mentioned by Marguin et al. (2021, pp. 27–28) are also valid for migration studies. First, there is the danger that a truly reflexive process can lead to endless reflexive loops. For example, reflecting on the notions and concepts we mobilise as researchers easily leads to multiple tasks: we start to examine the premises and genealogies of these concepts, and we engage in reflections on the complex ways we have been socialised as researchers in disciplinary contexts and our research field. Of course, these contexts have their own specific histories and are related to global inequalities, which should be considered as well, and so forth. Reflecting on notions, concepts, and social positions thus means reflecting on the distinctions they rest upon, which requires the reflection on other related or more fundamental distinctions. Taken seriously, reflexivity easily drags research into an eternal recursive process in which it remains trapped.

The second pitfall identified by Marguin et al. (2021) is the temptation to engage in unrestricted praise of reflexivity, which exhausts itself in navel-gazing. This occurs when the reflexive stance of the researcher and self-referential discourses about reflexivity become more important than empirical findings or analyses of society (ibid., p. 28). Similarly, Dean noted that the aim of doing reflexive research is not to help the researcher become a better person, such as by raising the awareness of their privilege as, e.g., a middle-class person, male or female, not migranticised, not racialised, etc.: "in the context of research, reflexively checking your privilege is not an end in itself, but a key methodological tool in understanding how one's gaze may affect the data one gathers and the interpretations one makes. Fundamentally, it is a tool to gather more accurate and insightful research data and affect social changes as a result of those findings better and quicker" (Dean, 2021, p. 183). As mentioned above, Bourdieu warns against analytically-shallow reflexive exercises, and he distinguishes between "narcissistic reflexivity"—which focuses on the individual researcher (and their personal experiences and sensitivities in the research process)—and "scientific reflexivity"—which aims to improve scientific knowledge by analysing the specific (academic and social) field of study in which researchers are situated (Bourdieu, 1993b).

A third challenge might be to critically question the self-proclaimed ability of reflexive approaches to bring about social change. Some scholars are skeptical and argue that, for example, positionality statements can become a function of coloniality and thus unintentionally reproduce power relations between differently racialised groups (Gani & Khan, 2024). Hence, what are the potentials—and what are the limits—of reflexivity in terms of triggering social change, reducing inequalities,

and bringing about more justice? While rigorously practicing reflexivity has the potential to bring about social change, there is clearly a limit to this aim. The main potential of reflexivity may lie in creating awareness of the boundedness and situatedness of knowledge and of the societal power relations which are at work. This awareness is a prerequisite for the production of more accurate data, which might later and indirectly impact societal developments. Importantly, reflexivity also creates the conditions for addressing and thinking about broader issues, such as inequality and social justice. However, more important than the emphasis of these potentials seems to be the acknowledgement that reflexivity will never come to an end: it is an ideal, one that needs revision again and again.

All of these challenges are well visible today. When preparing this book and debating the potentials and pitfalls of reflexivities, we realised how important it has become to critically observe the growing attractiveness of reflexive approaches in migration studies. In essence, we suggest that there is a growing need to reflect reflexivities. Reflecting reflexivities is relevant to intentionally interrupting the never-ending recursive process of reflexivity, to avoiding academic narcissism and mere tokenism, and to making sure that we question and change our research practices in order to produce new and critical knowledge on the social production of migration and on the ambivalent role of migration research.

Reflecting reflexivities in migration studies also sheds light on the particular omissions and weaknesses of the debate thus far. With few strong exceptions, such as references to feminist or postcolonial studies, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the traditions of and debates on reflexivity in fields of academic knowledge production outside migration studies. Respective debates in philosophy, as well as studies into the development of sciences, science and technology studies and the reflexive approaches and insights of the various social and cultural sciences, have rarely been referred to as yet.

Moreover, issues of time, genealogy and temporal change as studied prominently in history (among others) are as rarely discussed in the reflexivity debate in migration studies as issues of space and place. Admittedly, many authors have accounted for the historicity of migration, the impact of colonialism, the processual character, the spatiality or the spatial orders of migration and migration-related knowledge. But, only few—like Reinecke and Löhr (2024) with reference to the current uses of history in reflexive migration studies—have systematically reflected that also time and space as well as temporal and spatial references are socially produced and shaped. Analysing migration as a product of changing constellations and categorisations requires a shift of perspective: Like others, the fundamental categories of time and space (and their derivatives, like the ways migration scholars relate to the past or to certain places) should no longer be taken for granted. They should instead be incorporated into the reflexive scrutiny of migration-related knowledge production. The contributions of Schmoll (Chap. 8), of Bastia and Kofman (Chap. 7), and of Raghuram and Sondhi (Chap. 6) in this volume are some of the few examples which deliberately do this.

In a look at the debates, contributions, and authors who have performed the reflexive turn in migration studies, the impression arises that questions of reflexivity

are particularly suitable to and adaptable for qualitative research: it seems as if qualitative methodologies are more obvious approaches for studying the social relevance of categories or the construction of meanings. Nevertheless, there is also indisputably scholarship involving quantitative methods which explicitly engages with reflexivity (see Shinozaki, 2021, pp. 92–93, for an overview; Borrelli & Ruedin, 2024). Reflexive quantitative scholarship is important and absolutely needed, because knowledge on migration is often quantified or quantitatively justified. However, given the power of numbers, statistics, quantitative methodologies, and arguments of causality, the as-yet relatively weaker exploration of reflexivity in quantitative migration research is striking. The article by Mazzucato (Chap. 12, in this volume) sets out to tackle this particular challenge.

We are aware of the above symptomatic pitfalls and limitations of reflexive approaches. Our volume aims to avoid getting trapped by the delusion that flagging our research as reflexive makes it automatically better, more relevant, or immune to the various shortcomings of the recent promotion of reflexivities in migration studies. However, the contributions of this book strive to sidestep the identified pitfalls and to minimise the associated problems. Nevertheless, there is still undoubtedly some distance to bridge and some ground to cover.

1.4 Contributions of the Book

While browsing through this volume, readers will notice that the contributions vary in terms of their formats, styles, and lengths. In particular, we included a conversation with two scholars—Yolanda Hernández-Albújar and Ali Konyali—about the conditions of academic work and empirical research in this time of growing interest in reflexivity among scholars in migration studies. We purposely chose the format of a conversation for this contribution, because the whole book is very much the result of conversations among the authors—the outcome of an intense discussion that has lasted 3 years and is still ongoing. The constant reflecting in our joint project has also motivated us to plan concrete activities which will attempt to spread and implement the central ideas of this book in future research, teaching, and collaboration with actors outside academia. To this end, we conceive of this publication as just one step of a longer-lasting process.

The authors contributing to this volume were chosen in an effort to encapsulate a wide range of theoretical positions on reflexivity, of knowledge production, and of alternative ways of doing research. In this sense, the contributions deliberately represent different strands of doing reflexivities. Nevertheless, they all resemble each other in structure: we asked our authors **to select one particular problem, challenge, or pitfall of knowledge production in migration studies, to show how reflexivity and their respective theoretical approach help address this problem, and to develop alternative ways of doing research and shaping theory in and for migration studies**. In reading the contributions, it becomes clear that reflexivities permeate all stages and layers of the research process, from the construction of

the object of research and the research questions, to the chosen approaches and methodologies, to the ways data are (co-)produced and processed, to the ways research results are handled, theorised, and presented.

Presenting the outcome of a longer collaboration of involved authors in the form of an anthology requires decisions about focus and ordering. Of course, we all know that the structure of a book like this one is as contingent as the analytical perspectives we adopt, and we could have chosen different ways to group the contributions. Since the identified layers of reflexivity are closely interrelated, it is no surprise that most articles respond to several of the various challenges the book tackles. Still, the structure we came up with is the expression of our conviction concerning what deserves special attention and emphasis in the current debate on reflexivities in migration studies.

As we have shown in this introduction, issues of reflexivity are inextricably interwoven with the multi-faceted process of knowledge production. Thus, in an attempt to lay the groundwork for further arguments, the first section of this volume is dedicated to the interrelationship of **Epistemology and Producing Knowledge** (Part I).

Part I opens with a forceful analysis of the formal and informal, often invisible, epistemic practices of academic writing. *Shpresa Jashari* deciphers academic writing as one of the central modes of knowledge production in migration studies by crossing the problematic boundary between the two constitutive subjectivities on which migration studies rest: the researched migrant and the migration researcher. Reflecting on her ambivalent experiences as a young migranticised scholar entering migration studies and doing migration research—i.e., a writing migrant—allows her to critically approach the normalising hegemonic discourses, institutions, research norms, and research practices in this field and their underlying nationalising, racialising, and classicising forms of boundary-making from a de-centred perspective. Drawing on text- and genre-analysis, on auto-/ethnographic and creative writing, as well as on feminist, postcolonial, and critical race studies, Jashari's reflection on her experiences and standpoint provides crucial information on the embodied nature of self-/governance processes which are at play in the functioning of the academic apparatus as it produces the different subjectivities necessary to "do migration studies".

Taking as their example the growing need to improve societal conditions for the inclusion of refugees in the Netherlands, *Elena Ponzoni, Halleh Ghorashi and Maria Rast* elaborate on how critically-engaged qualitative methodology can potentially contribute to transforming existing exclusionary structures and knowledge about 'refugees' (which mainly reinforce the negative image of a vulnerable and deficient group in need of help). They argue in favour of researchers partaking in co-creative engagement with diverse stakeholders. The co-creative knowledge production appears crucial to increasing academia's impact and to unsettling and potentially reducing its complicity in reproducing subtle sources of exclusion. Drawing on empirical research and Sandra Harding's concept of "strong reflexivity", the authors highlight what is required to produce alternative forms of knowledge and to rethink conditions for inclusion: the crafting of "daring in-between

spaces"—i.e., 'platforms' like the 'Refugee Academy' where engaged researchers, citizen initiatives, and refugee-led advocates can get involved.

One important way to gain insights into the conditions, forms, and consequences of migration studies' knowledge production is to observe and empirically investigate other migration researchers who produce knowledge on migration and who thereby shape the realities, perceptions, and politics of migration. But how should migration researchers engage with colleagues, including those who work for powerful institutions, without endangering reputations and careers? How can the risk and harm involved in producing knowledge on the production of knowledge on migration be avoided, or at least reduced? To this end, *Inken Bartels, Philipp Schäfer and Laura Stielike* propose an approach they call "double reflexivity". Double reflexivity denotes a research practice which is simultaneously critical and caring; it entails reflecting on the epistemological, methodological, and political implications of other migration researchers' knowledge production, as well as scrutinising one's own knowledge practices. To incorporate double reflexivity into research practice, the authors resort to (self-)reflexive techniques developed in feminist science and technology studies.

The last article of Part I explores the connection between the current reflexive turn in migration studies and a fundamental unease which *Manuel Dieterich and Boris Nieswand* call the crisis of representation (referring to the crisis of representation in anthropology in the 1980s and 1990s). The authors interpret this crisis as a result of the delegitimisation of established forms of academic authority to speak and write about "discriminable subjects" in general and about migrants and their descendants in particular. They argue that reflexivity is a reaction to a range of critiques of realist epistemologies and is joined to multiple paths of post-positivist knowledge production. Four types of reflexivity are distinguished: (1) reflexivity about intersectional positionality, (2) reflexivity about positionality within the field of research, (3) reflexivity about positionality within the academic field, and (4) reflexivity about positionality in relation to activism and policy-making. The authors suggest that the promise of reflexivity is that practices of self-relativisation increase the capacity to deal with the differences and the plurality within the field of migration studies; it facilitates pragmatically working with and across epistemic and moral limitations, rather than condemning them.

Since all that is done by migration studies and since all knowledge that we produce, share, transfer, or utilise are influenced by our historical positionalities and by the unequal social structures we live in—and since all this contributes to our daily work—a cross-cutting topic of our reflexive endeavour is the consideration of societal power relations. We cannot escape them: they are at work when we study migration, as well as when migration and migration-related meanings are produced and reproduced outside of academia. Therefore, in applying the crucial lens of **Knowledge Production and Power** (Part II), we strive to elaborate on various dimensions and materialisations of power in the context of migration-related—and, as such, often contested—knowledge production.

The first contribution of Part II calls for a move beyond rhetorical decolonisation in migration studies. *Parvati Raghuram and Gunjan Sondhi* critically identify that

decolonisation in academic knowledge production thus far is often no more than a claim, without any real transfer of power to those who still do not have academic authority or power. They argue that, in principle, the field of migration studies is ideally situated to engage in questions and processes of decolonisation, with its focus on border, diaspora, and mobility and its core concepts of nation and migrant—and, due to this seemingly default alignment with the vocabulary of decolonisation and decolonisation studies, migration studies scholars have jumped straight into writing about decolonisation in migration studies. However, there has been limited reflection on who is doing the decolonisation and from where the problem of colonisation is being approached. The authors show how decolonisation in migration studies has come to be at risk of being colonised in the Western academy. Against this backdrop, they offer suggestions as to what form decolonisation might actually take.

Recent years have seen a growing discussion about valuing the knowledge produced in countries of the Global South and decolonising the knowledge coming from the Global North. This can be understood as a response to what geographical perspectives reveal: the marked global inequalities in knowledge production and knowledge circulation. *Tanja Bastia and Eleonore Kofman* address these inequalities as outcomes and means of specific power relations. They take one of the newer epistemic communities within migration studies (that of gender and migration) to probe more deeply into the institutional dimensions of the uneven production and circulation of knowledge, including the ability to conduct research and fund it, the hegemony of English and the implications thereof for publication, and valuation of knowledge and teaching. Reflecting on how research on gender and migration is produced and taken into account (or not) in some of the key gender and migration discussions in East Asia, Latin America, and Western Europe, they show that it is not just Southern knowledge which sits at the margins but also non-Western studies, which are often not adequately recognised. Moreover, the authors provide some concrete propositions for how this uneven knowledge production might be effectively challenged.

The subsequent contribution by *Camille Schmoll* takes up the analysis of linguistic hegemony by focusing on marginalisation and migration scholarship in the Francophone world. Her chapter looks at a specific facet of power dynamics in migration academia: the exercise of symbolic violence, intellectual dominance, and scholarly acknowledgment through language and linguistic proficiency. The author highlights the limitations inherent in the field of migration studies, which—by predominantly drawing from Anglophone literature—have disregarded the linguistic diversity embedded in migration scholarship. She scrutinises the peculiarities of the French context within migration scholarship, delineating its uneasy and paradoxical status as a former core and a contemporary periphery and examining its interconnections with other French-speaking contexts, particularly those in the Global South. As a result of her analysis, she emphasises the need to cultivate a multilingual framework and to develop strategies to foster the emergence of new voices and languages for and in migration scholarship.

Faten Khazaei rounds off Part II by shedding light on 'Racism in and through Migration Studies'. Along her line of thought, the pressing question of taking colonialism and racism into account is a call to develop attentiveness to the power differences in the research process itself. Like many scholars who have been critical of the role played by migration studies in the asymmetric problematisation of 'migrants', this chapter links migration studies' tendency to (re-)produce a problem-laden perspective with its scant and only recent attention to race and racism being at work. The author argues that in order to avoid the risk of contributing—however unwillingly—to upholding a "racial order of things", we need to explicitly address the forms and mechanisms of racism. In this respect, migration studies can learn important lessons from critical race studies and postcolonial studies. The article presents inspiring examples of the ways in which these respective fields have tackled similar concerns to those of migration studies for decades without running the risk of contributing to the European neocolonial and racist governance of immigration.

Another set of articles explores the fundamental importance and the 'power' of the **Concepts and Categorisations** we employ and engage (Part III). This section is dedicated to the emergence and the impact of conceptual frames, but it also substantiates the necessity to continuously and at times purposely question and alter the concepts, terminologies, and categorisations on which we depend when making sense of the world and when (re)producing the world as researchers.

Social phenomena must be named to become tangible and accessible for investigation and analysis; this is why migration-related concepts and categories are inherently tied to terminology. Terms are never just names for something, as they come with connotations and associations. Terms have a 'biography' and are always embedded in specific contexts; they are never neutral or objective, but rather prefigure the ways in which the corresponding phenomena are thought about. For these reasons, reflection on terms and terminologies should lie at the very heart of any academic knowledge production and any reflection on concepts and categories, but this is not the case. Inquiring into the emergence, the heuristic value, and the social functions of relevant terms is particularly crucial for migration studies, as migration-related categorisations and reproductions of concepts often occur at the intersection between academia, politics, and media (and other means of cultural production). To this end, *Jens Schneider*'s article opens Part III with an analysis of the coming-of-age of a new term and the unfolding of its potential. His contribution looks at the terminology and concept of *post-migration* and how its trajectory developed, from its origin in 'second generation' theatre production in Germany through academic discourse and political activism to its dissemination to other countries.

Maurice Crul and Frans Lelie tackle the difficult task of revising the so-called integration or assimilation theory, which they do by changing the people who are the usual subject of the integration gaze. Since the main focus of integration and assimilation studies has been on the attitudes and practices of migranticised people (both non-white and white) or of ethnic and racial minority groups, the power of white people—i.e., non-migranticised people or those without a migration background—and its influence on societal changes has remained largely unstudied. In

response, Crul and Lelie suggest shifting the perspective: they argue that in order to achieve a necessary reflexive turn in integration and assimilation studies, the debate must be pushed in a new direction, with help from crucial insights from critical race theory. This proposed shift not only concerns a shift towards studying societal power relations but also entails a conceptual and methodological shift regarding what should be the main focus of research. In contrast to mainstream integration and assimilation studies, the empirical example they present focusses deliberately on white people without a migration background and on their impact on societal contexts in which non-white people and/or people with a migration background try to participate, to belong, and to achieve social mobility.

Migration-related concepts and categories often adhere to a nation-state logic; they are consequential, as they prefigure research problems and frame our analysis, and they are inevitably linked to the type of knowledge which is produced in migration research and migration policy. In order to reveal the blind spots which occur when one way of categorising dominates a research field, and in order to overcome the nation-state gaze, *Valentina Mazzucato* experiments with analytical categories. Instead of the commonly-used but rather static categories of 'migration', 'ethnicity', or 'generation', in her chapter she draws on the transnational and mobility turns in social sciences to develop mobility-based categories through which to study young people's lives. For example, mobility trajectories enable investigating elements of commonality and difference between youth, irrespective of where they or their parents come from; they also enable investigating within-group differences. The article exemplifies what alternative mobility-based categories could look like, based on a recent, large-N, primary data collection project on secondary-school youths' spatial mobility in one African and three European countries.

The fourth article of this section explores the potentials of conceptual work to add to ongoing debates on the production of knowledge in migration studies as well as to intervene in public discourse. *Carolin Fischer* utilises theoretical approaches to the workings and repercussions of 'violence' to uncover how gender has been mobilised in right-wing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim campaigns in Switzerland, where gendering has amplified stereotypical, hostile, and racialised representations of individuals and groups who are presented as problematic migrant others. In these campaigns, violence has served as a symbolic tool to reinforce a sense of dangerous otherness. On the basis of this empirical case, the chapter demonstrates that employing violence as an analytical concept enables scholars to approach migration-related issues from new and different angles, as well as to produce alternative narratives which might help rectify the problematic orientation of contemporary migration governance.

In research practice, certain categories are closely interwoven, so closely and so longstanding, that the categorial connection appears almost naturally given. Examples are the equation of migration and international movements, the association of migration with social problems, or the age-old marriage between migration and culture. *Kesi Mahendran* uses the latter as an opportunity to propose a divorce which allows for innovative research. In order to divorce the epistemic marriage between migration and culture which has characterised the study of human

migration (across national borders) for over a hundred years, she introduces a new category—a new couple: the mixed migration-mobility couple. This concept challenges the assumptions around the host country evident in social psychological acculturation studies and beyond. On the basis of interviews with partners in intimate relationships this chapter contributes to the recently emerging lines of inquiry around mixed marriages, intimate citizenship and cross-border couples. The chapter argues that the new category has the potential to reflexively interrogate many of the central assumptions and allegiances of intergroup, integration and acculturation studies: allegiances to the binaries between migrant/non-migrant, national/transnational and stasis/mobility.

Apostolos Andrikopoulos concludes Part III with a (classic) example of longstanding but unreflexive reproduction of non-analytic categories in migration studies. Despite the significant growth of family-related migration research in recent decades, key concepts such as 'family', 'kinship', and 'marriage' have not been adequately problematised. To this day, researchers rely on legal definitions and state-based or common-sense categories instead of analytic categories of kinship and family. The chapter shows that this usage of categories in practice may inadvertently have the following problematic implications: ethnocentrism (when researchers only rely on their own understanding of kinship categories); statism (when researchers uncritically adopt state-defined categories of marriage and family and reproduce nation-state forms of exclusion); and/or normative assumptions about the family and family relations which may differ from actual family practices (when researchers rely on their own and migrants' normative conceptions of kinship). As the author argues, a closer engagement with kinship theory would enable researchers to address and possibly avoid these pitfalls and to better understand the complex ways in which kinship relations intersect with migration and mobility.

In full awareness of reflexivity as an ongoing and never-ending task, the final part of the book critically takes stock of the assembled contributions as part of a longer-lasting development. **Reflecting Reflexivities** (Part IV) allows us to pin down where we stand, what we missed, and what might be ahead of us.

In order to reflect the 'work in progress' nature, we met with our colleagues *Yolanda Hernández-Albújar and Ali Konyali* and had a thoughtful, inspiring conversation about the conditions of academic work and empirical research in this time of growing interest in reflexivity among scholars in migration studies. We asked these scholars to participate in this conversation as we find their view particularly insightful: Yolanda recently co-edited a reflexive collected volume on "Migrant Scholars Researching Migration" (Gemignani et al., 2024). Given her longstanding and intensive exploration of reflexivity, subjectivity and biography in research, we were eager to hear her take. Ali, on the other hand, is a long-standing member of the Global (De)Centre (https://globaldecentre.org), an international network of critical and reflexive social scientists, artists, and others. Recognising his sharp and critical views on the issue of reflexivity—views we highly appreciate—we invited him to join this debate out of curiosity. During the conversation, it became clear that both scholars, drawing from their experiences as migranticised researchers, highlight some shortcomings in the current debate. Our discussion and their critical feedback

on our overall endeavor demonstrate what reflexivity can achieve and what still needs to be addressed.

Last but not least, we invited *Heike Drotbohm* to read and comment on the book manuscript. A decade ago, Boris Nieswand and Heike Drotbohm identified and coined the so-called 'reflexive turn' which has been shaping migration studies ever since, especially in Europe (Nieswand & Drotbohm, 2014). Heike's chapter takes the state-of-the-art demonstrated in this edited volume as an opportunity to tackle the chances, risks, and challenges of the most recent standards established through this 'turn'. The chapter concentrates on three aspects. First, it discusses the pros and cons of concentrating migration studies on certain migration categories, namely sedimented forms of knowledge and classification. To this end, it invites us to push the research perspective beyond established power domains in order to discover additional fields in which both subversiveness and the ordinariness of the everyday are articulated. Second, the chapter problematises the reduction of migration studies to contemporary contexts and processes, and it invites us to steep our knowledge production deeper in the histories of the respective contexts or actor biographies in order to recognise how mobility-related categories and classifications have come into being. Third, this chapter deals with the not-yet-fully explored opportunities of collaborative work, which also pose new hurdles and challenges, especially with respect to reflection on positionalities and normativities. With these three new axes of reflexivity, this final chapter outlines ways in which the central paradigm of the reflexive turn in migration studies can be made useful for adjacent research fields in which people are also sorted and ranked into different kinds, such as gender and race studies, humanitarian studies, or global health studies.

Acknowledgements We would like to warmly thank Matthias Land from Osnabrück University who took excellent care of the layout and formatting of the book manuscript. We are more than grateful for the critical feedback we received on a first draft of this introduction from the members of the LAPS at the University of Neuchâtel who challenged us during the institute's colloquia with many insightful comments and questions. Finally, our thanks go to the two external reviewers, whose comments were very helpful and highly constructive. Yet, of course, we retain full responsibility for the content of this introduction.

The work on this introduction and the preparation of the book manuscript were supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)—SFB 1604–501120656—and the the "nccr—on the move" (funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation)—grant 51NF40-205605.

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