

IMISCOE Research Series

Janine Dahinden
Andreas Pott *Editors*

Reflexivities and Knowledge Production in Migration Studies

Pitfalls and Alternatives

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Janine Dahinden • Andreas Pott
Editors

Reflexivities and Knowledge Production in Migration Studies

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Editors

Janine Dahinden
Université de Neuchâtel
Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Andreas Pott
Universität Osnabrück
Osnabrück, Germany



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Blurb

Few researchers today would question the necessity of reflexivity or the idea that knowledge production is always situated. In migration studies, in particular, reflexive approaches and the involvement in societal contestations over migration have become highly debated issues, not least because the field has been criticised for its potential to reproduce hegemonic power relations. This volume, a product of IMISCOE's Standing Committee 'Reflexivities in Migration Studies', contributes to these discussions by opening new and original avenues of inquiry. The contributions in this interdisciplinary anthology offer more than state-of-the-art reflections. Rather than merely identifying pitfalls and theorising the challenges of knowledge production in migration studies, they propose concrete alternatives. By exploring innovative forms of producing knowledge on migration-related questions, they seek to transform the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological foundations of the field.

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Notes on Contributors

Apostolos Andrikopoulos is Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Social Anthropology at University College London (UCL). Previously, he held postdoctoral fellowships at Harvard University and the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on migration, kinship, and sexuality. His first book, *Argonauts of West Africa: Unauthorized Migration and Kinship Dynamics in a Changing Europe* (University of Chicago Press, 2023), examines the paradoxes of kinship in the lives of unauthorised African migrants as they struggle for mobility, employment, and citizenship in Europe. The book is based on his PhD dissertation, which was awarded the IMISCOE Maria Baganha Best Dissertation Award. He has (co)edited two special issues and a virtual issue for the journals *Ethnography*, the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, and the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (JRAI)*.

Inken Bartels is a sociologist and postdoctoral researcher in the research group *The Production of Knowledge on Migration* at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) at Osnabrück University. She is member of the Collaborate Research Center *Production of Migration* (SFB 1604). Her current research project focuses on the production of migration statistics and its effects on migration governance in West Africa. Her research interests include the politics of counting, categorising, and managing migration in postcolonial contexts and are situated in the disciplines of (International) Political Sociology, International Relations, Science and Technology Studies, and (Critical) Migration and Border Studies. She is the author of *The IOM in North Africa. Making International Migration Management* (Routledge, 2022) and co-editor of *Umkämpfte Begriffe der Migration. Ein Inventar* (transcript, 2023).

Tanja Bastia is Professor in Migration and Development at the Global Development Institute, University of Manchester. She is interested in social relations, inequality, mobility, and space. She has been carrying out research on Bolivian migration for two decades and has published two monographs: *Gender, Migration and Social Transformation: Intersectionality in Bolivian Itinerant Migrations* (Routledge, 2019) and *Diverse Transnational Care: Ageing and Migration in Bolivia* (Policy

and Bristol University Press, with Claudia Calsina, 2025), and she has edited *Migration and Inequality* (Routledge, 2011) and co-edited the *Routledge Handbook of Migration and Development* (with Ronald Skeldon, 2020).

Maurice Crul is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the Free University in Amsterdam. He mostly worked on the topic of education and children of immigrants and refugee children in a comparative European and Transatlantic context. He has coordinated the TIES project (*The Integration of the European Second generation*) in ten countries and the ELITES project on the upcoming elite among the second generation in four countries. In 2017, Maurice Crul was awarded the prestigious ERC advanced grant for the project *Becoming a Minority* (BAM) on the integration of people of native descent in majority minority cities in five European countries. He is the author of numerous books among which are *Superdiversity. A New Vision on Integration* (2013) and *The New Minority. People Without Migration Background in the Superdiverse City* (2023).

Janine Dahinden is Professor of Transnational Studies and project leader in the nccr-on the move, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. As Mercator Fellow she is affiliated to the Collaborative Research Centre *Production of Migration* (SFB 1604) at Osnabrück University. She is interested in technologies of migranticisation as they emerge from nation-state building and other historical legacies. In her work she aims at understanding processes of mobility, transnationalisation and boundary making, and their concomitant production of inequalities linked to ethnicity, race, class, religion, or gender. She is the co-director of the IMISCOE Standing Committee on *Reflexivities in Migration Studies*. See also: janinedahinden.net. (ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1806-3520)

Manuel Dieterich is currently doing his PhD at the Institute for Sociology at the University of Tübingen. It is based on his research project on threat, diversity, and urbanity, which was part of the SFB 923 *Threatened Orders – Societies Under Stress* (University of Tübingen). His field research investigates an unequal and diverse neighbourhood constellation in Johannesburg with the aim of showing the effects of local threat communication on neighbourly coexistence and the emergence of different threat figurations. His research interests include morality, migration, urban and neighbourhood studies, and sociology of critique. In a previous research project, he studied a local conflict between the city administration and a residents' initiative on the planned construction of a new refugee accommodation in Tübingen.

Heike Drotbohm is Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Mainz University. Earlier research, conducted in transatlantic social fields, concentrated on spiritual belonging in the Haitian diaspora (Canada) as well as on the intersection between im/mobility, kinship, and care extending between Cape Verde, the USA, and Portugal. More recently, she followed migrant trajectories across urban and cross-border spaces (in Brazil and Central America) and explored configurations of

care and control in settings of pro-migrant solidarity and humanitarianism. Since 2021, she is PI at the Collaborative Research Centre *Studies in Human Differentiation* in Mainz. Publications appeared in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Ethnography*, *Citizenship Studies*, the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Humanity*, *Focaal*, and several co-editions. She was fellow at the research centre *Work and the Life Course in Global History* (HU Berlin) and at the *New School for Social Research* (New York City) and guest professor at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

Carolyn Fischer leads the strategic thematic field Caring Society at Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH). She is also researching and teaching at the Department of Social Work at BFH. In this capacity, she currently co-directs a project on temporariness and exclusion in refugee housing. Carolyn recently concluded a project exploring the interplay of violence and safety in refugee protection, which was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Between 2014 and 2023, Carolyn held different postdoctoral research and teaching positions at the University of Bern and the University of Neuchâtel. From 2017 to 2019, she led an international research project entitled *Engendering migration, development and belonging*, which was funded by the Swiss Network of International Studies (SNIS). Carolyn holds a DPhil (PhD) in Development Studies from the University of Oxford and a diploma degree in Sociology from Bielefeld University.

Halleh Ghorashi is Full Professor of Diversity and Integration in the Department of Sociology at the VU (Vrije Universiteit) Amsterdam, the Netherlands. She combines a multidisciplinary background in social sciences (anthropology, sociology, gender studies, (political) philosophy, and organisation studies) with a critical approach in diversity and refugee/migration studies with narrative co-creative methodology. In 2017, she received the prestigious VICI grant on Engaged Scholarship and Narratives of Change from NWO. From 2018 to 2024, she was appointed as a Crown Member of the SER (Dutch Social Economic Council) and in 2020 as a member of KNAW (The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences). In 2021, she received Amsterdam Impact Award for her research about refugees and diversity. In 2022, she was appointed as a member of the State committee against discrimination and racism. www.hallehghorashi.com

Yolanda Hernández-Albújar is Associate Professor at Universidad Loyola Andalucía in Seville where she teaches courses in Cultural Anthropology, Migration, and Gender. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master's degree in Latin American Studies from the University of Florida. She explores, from a cultural perspective, issues of identity, migration, and gender. She specialises in qualitative and visual methodologies and collaborates with various journals and associations. She is now the principal investigator in two international projects regarding migrants in Latin America and has recently edited the book *Migrant Scholars Researching Migration. Reflexivity, Subjectivity and Biography in Research* with Routledge (2024).

Shpresa Jashari is a social scientist, linguist, and author. She is interested in migration, discourse, and language, particularly in the intersecting institutionalised, spatialised, and intimately embodied ways, in which differences and inequalities are produced and legitimised. At present, Shpresa works as a researcher, lecturer, and project leader at the University of Teacher Education in Zug, Switzerland. Her work there focuses on migrantisation, discrimination, and racism in contemporary school contexts marked by transnationalism and post-migration. Before that, she worked at the Universities of Bremen, Freiburg im Breisgau, Neuchâtel, and Zurich. Shpresa has a doctoral degree in Social Sciences from the University of Neuchâtel (Thesis entitled: *LANGUAGE AS B/ORDER: Crossing European Borders and Boundaries through Mandatory 'Pre-Integrative Language Testing'*) and a Master's degree in German Philology, International Law, and Political Sciences from the University of Zürich. Also, she is a mother. And a migrant, still.

Faten Khazaei is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Northumbria University, UK. She is an interdisciplinary scholar by training and works at the intersection of gender studies, critical race studies, and the sociology of migration, institutions, and violence. She ethnographically investigates the ways in which state institutions such as police, healthcare, and welfare sectors, in the name of treating public problems, (re)produce an unequal social, ethno-racial, and gendered order. Rather than viewing nationality, migration, gender, class, 'race', and ethnicity as pre-existing and supposedly descriptive categories, she focuses on the processes through which public policies and practices create, normalise, and naturalise these categories. Faten is a member of the Steering Committee of The Global (De)Centre, a network of academics for North-South Dialogue. She also sits on the editorial board of *Gender Issues* book series, directed by the Swiss Association of Gender Studies, and the *Journal of Gender Based Violence*, published by Bristol University Press. Her research has been funded by the European Commission and the Swiss National Science Foundation, and published in the *British Journal of Criminology*, *The Swiss Journal of Sociology*, *Cahiers du genre*, and the *Dutch Journal of Gender Studies*.

Eleonore Kofman is Professor of Gender, Migration and Citizenship and co-Director of the Social Policy Research Centre, Middlesex University London. Her research focuses on gender and migration, including less studied aspects such as South-South and North-South gendered migrations, and the articulation between different forms such as family and labour. She is conducting research on *Gendered Dynamics of Labour Migration* (Middle East and South Asia) as part of the UK Global Challenges Research Fund Gender, Justice and Security Hub (2019–24) and on *DYNAMIG: How migration decisions are made: diverse aspirations, trajectories and policy effects* Horizon Europe (2023–2025). She is the co-author of *Gendered Migrations and Global Social Reproduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, and has published articles in *Comparative Migration Studies*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *International Migration*, and *Social Politics*. She is a member of

the Executive Board of IMISCOE and previously an Editor in Chief of the journal *Work, Employment and Society*.

Ali Konyali is a Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Berlin University of the Arts. Previously, he worked as a research assistant at the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM). He studied Arts and Culture as well as European Studies at Maastricht University, and International Migration and Ethnic Relations at Malmö University. He received his doctorate from Erasmus University Rotterdam with a dissertation on professionally successful descendants of migrants from Turkey. He is a member of the Global (De)Centre.

Frans Lelie is a fellow at the Sociology Department of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She wrote about the education paths of children of immigrants and refugee children. Frans was the project manager of the TIES project (*The Integration of the European Second Generation*) in fifteen European cities and the ELITES/Pathways to Success project on the upcoming elite among the second generation. She is the project manager of *Becoming a Minority* (BAM) on the integration of people without a migration background in majority minority cities in five European countries. Frans co-authored many articles and books, among which are *Superdiversity. A New Perspective on Integration* (2013) and *The New Minority. People Without a Migration Background in the Superdiverse City* (2023).

Kesi Mahendran is a Professor in Social & Political Psychology at the Open University. Her research programme aims to improve the dialogue between citizens and their governments on vexed political questions where consensus is not easily achieved—e.g. migration-mobility and citizenship. She established the Public Dialogue Psychology Collaboratory (PDPC) in 2020 which is developing dialogical qualitative and quantitative methods including interactive online mapping tools. She is a founding member and Chair of the British Psychological Society's Political Psychology Section. She is a board member of the IMISCOE Standing Committee on *Reflexivities in Migration Studies*. She is Section Editor at *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* and co-editor of the book *Discursive Governance in Politics, Policy and the Public Sphere* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). She has published in several journals including *Human Arenas* and *Political Psychology* and is currently writing *The Migrating Self: The Psychology of Migration and the Public* (Routledge, 2026).

Valentina Mazzucato is Professor of Globalisation and Development at Maastricht University, the Netherlands. She is PI of international research projects that focus on migration between Europe and Africa from a transnational perspective. She was awarded an ERC Consolidator Grant to study the mobility trajectories of transnational youth (www.motrayl.com). Her research is characterised by multi-sited research designs and mixed-method approaches combining survey and ethnographic methods. She works in interdisciplinary teams of researchers from Europe and Africa and fieldwork takes place in both locations. She publishes in migration

studies, development, psychology, and geography journals. Mazzucato is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3008-6541)

Boris Nieswand is Professor of Sociology at the University of Tübingen. He studied sociology in Bielefeld and received his PhD in social anthropology in Halle/Saale. Boris has worked at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, among other institutions. His research and teaching interests include the role of reflexivity in migration and diversity studies, urban studies, moral sociology, and ethnography. His most recent work is concerned with the role of morality for the understanding of migration and diversity.

Elena Ponzoni is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and the Department of Child and Family Studies (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam). She works in the fields of Diversity and Inclusion, Philosophy of Language, and Sociology of Scientific Knowledge. Her current research concerns the contribution of critically engaged scholarship in countering exclusionary societal structures hampering the societal participation of refugees and migrants and interpersonal encounters between parenting professionals and communities in super-diverse cities. She is coordinator of the Refugee Academy (Institute of Societal Resilience, VU Amsterdam), an academic platform that connects societal and academic actors working on the inclusion of refugees in Dutch society.

Andreas Pott is Professor of Social Geography at Osnabrück University, Germany. He is chair of the Collaborative Research Centre *Production of Migration* (SFB 1604), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) since 2024. He serves as deputy director of the interdisciplinary Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) and co-director of the IMISCOE Standing Committee on *Reflexivities in Migration Studies*. His academic work is dedicated to the study of geographies of migration and to the development of a reflexive theory of the societal production of migration. Recent publications include *New Social Mobility: Second Generation Pioneers in Europe* (2022, co-ed.), *Organisations and the production of migration and in/exclusion* (2021, Comparative Migration Studies, co-author), and *Was ist ein Migrationsregime? What is a Migration Regime?* (2018, co-ed.).

Parvati Raghuram is Professor of Geography and Migration at the Open University. She has published widely on gender, migration, and development and on postcolonial theory. Her report on Indian women migrants in the EU was published by the ILO in 2022. Her most recent AHRC funded project is *Decolonising Peace Education in Africa* where she is looking at care ethics, an abiding interest. She is also part of the projects *Migration for Inclusive African Growth* and *Writing International Student Migration in Africa*. She won the prestigious Murchison Award of the Royal Geographical Society in 2016. In the UK, she is an active

member of the steering group of the Race working group of the Royal Geographical Society. She is Chair of the Executive Board of IMISCOE. She co-edits the book series *Mobility and Politics* (Palgrave) and is associate editor of the *Geographical Journal*.

Maria Charlotte Rast (PhD) is a sociologist, researcher, and lecturer, specialising in diversity, inclusion, participation, co-creation, and civil society engagement, with a particular focus on the experiences, agency, and contributions of people with a refugee background. At the time of writing, her research was affiliated with the Refugee Academy at VU Amsterdam and Prof. Dr. Halleh Ghorashi's NWO-VICI project *Engaged scholarship and narratives of change in comparative perspective*.

Philipp Schäfer is the scientific coordinator of the Lower Saxony research area ›Futures of Migration‹ (FuturMig) at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) at Osnabrück University. He is member of the Collaborative Research Centre *Production of Migration* (SFB 1604) at Osnabrück University. His work focuses on the relationship of migration, education and the future, the migration-security nexus, knowledge production, migration and language, and local migration regimes. He received his PhD in sociology from Konstanz University with a study on how provisionality is used and negotiated in local settings as an instrument to govern the arrival and accommodation of asylum-seeking persons. His research was made possible through the funding from the Cluster of Excellence *Cultural Foundations of Social Integration*, the German Academic Scholarship Foundation and the Volkswagen Foundation. He studied cultural sciences and economics in Lüneburg, Lyon and Leipzig.

Camille Schmoll completed a doctoral thesis at the University of Paris Nanterre (2004) and a Marie Curie post-doctorate at the European University Institute, Florence (2005–2007). Formerly an associate professor in geography at the University of Paris Diderot (2007–2020) and a junior fellow of Institut Universitaire de France (2015–2020), she is now Directrice d'Etudes at EHESS. She is also a member of the CNRS research team *Géographie-cités*, a fellow of Institut Convergences Migrations, and chief editor of *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*. Her research topics include international migration, gender, and space; urban approaches to migration patterns; cosmopolitanism and borders; gender, generation, and the family in international migration; and qualitative approaches to migration.

Jens Schneider is Senior Researcher at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) and coordinator of the Reflexivity Lab in the Collaborative Research Centre *Production of Migration* (SFB 1604) at Osnabrück University. After studying Anthropology, Musicology, Linguistics, and Ethnic Studies at the universities of Hamburg and Amsterdam, he received his PhD in Anthropology at the University of Tübingen on a research project on German post-unification identity. He was coordinator of the large European TIES Survey on

second generation and the Pathways to Success network on social mobility in immigrant families. His current research topics include identities, super-diverse cities, and neighbourhoods, and how migration-related diversity is reflected in the cultural sector. Major recent publications are *New Social Mobility: Second Generation Pioneers in Europe* (2023), *Identity Politics and Political Education* (2023), *Demographic 'Megatrends' and Their Implications* (2018), *Migration and Diversity in the Cultural Administration* (2022), and *On Continuities. Migration and Institutional (Non-)Change* (2023).

Gunjan Sondhi is Senior Lecturer of Geography and Director of the Centre for Global Challenges and Social Justice (GCSJ) at the Open University. Gunjan's expertise lies within the interplay of gender and class within skilled and educational mobilities focusing on Asia, Europe, and North America. This work reorients gender and migration research by drawing on migrant experiences to understand patriarchy and other structural inequities in the destination countries. Gunjan has successfully led several funded projects, has engaged in public policy discussions, and is widely published, bridging academic inquiry with societal impact, having published in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Global Networks*, *Population Space and Place*, and *Migration Policy and Practice*, an IOM publication. She is a board member of the IMISCOE Standing Committee on *Reflexivities in Migration Studies*.

Laura Stielike is a postdoctoral researcher in the interdisciplinary research group *The Production of Knowledge on Migration* at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) at Osnabrück University where she explores the digital transformation of migration-related knowledge production. She is member of the Collaborative Research Centre *Production of Migration* (SFB 1604) at Osnabrück University and affiliated with the Centre for Social Theory at Ghent University. For her PhD at Freie Universität Berlin, she investigated the 'migration & development dispositif' with a focus on Cameroonian migration to Germany. Laura was visiting fellow at the International Migration Institute at Oxford University and has taught courses on digital migration studies, migration and development, intersectionality, postcolonial studies, digital transformation, and discourse analysis. She studied political science at FU Berlin and Sciences Po Paris. In her master's thesis, she analysed colonial continuities in German development cooperation.

Chapter 1

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



Janine Dahinden and Andreas Pott

To do social science research properly, one must be reflexive—no serious methodologist would honestly argue otherwise today. (Jonathan Dean, 2021, p. 178)

Feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges. (Donna Haraway, 1988, p. 581)

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

J. Dahinden (✉)

Université de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland
e-mail: janine.dahinden@unine.ch

A. Pott

Universität Osnabrück, Osnabrück, Germany
e-mail: andreas.pott@uni-osnabrueck.de

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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; Bommers, 1996) or racism (Kalpaka & Rätzsch, 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

¹This 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; Bommers, 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, migrantised, 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 migrantised 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 “de-naturalize 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

²For 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 migrantised and racialised people are observed and become the research ‘subjects’—thereby becoming ‘the data’—the researchers are mostly ‘white’ and/or ‘non-migrantised’, 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 migrantisation 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, migrantised 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-migrantised 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 migrantised 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 réflexivité 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 migrantised 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 migrantised 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 migrantised 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 migrantised 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 migrantised 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., migrantised 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 ‘recentering’ 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. Schmolli (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 migrant-cised, 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 migrantised 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 migrantised people (both non-white and white) or of ethnic and racial minority groups, the power of white people—i.e., non-migrantised 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. *Carolyn 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 long-standing 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://globaldecetre.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.

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Part I
Epistemology and Producing Knowledge

Chapter 2

Writing Migrants. Or What I Learnt About the Racialised Production of ‘Scientificity’ While Crossing the Boundary Between Researched Migrant and Migration Researcher



Shpresa Jashari

I never wanted to build a “body of work”, but to preserve these, our bodies, breathing and unaccounted for, inside the work. (Ocean Vuong, *On earth we’re briefly gorgeous* (2019, p. 175))

The field of migration studies, the practices constituting it, and consequently the forms of knowledge it produces, are fundamentally structured and hierarchised by a racialising, and with it a nationalising and classicising boundary.

I have struggled with this boundary since I entered the research field as a PhD student. And it has thwarted my work on an almost daily basis. Yet for the longest time it remained invisible to me, intangible and unsayable in its taken for granted presence.

The boundary is quasi-disciplinary, for it delimits the phenomena migration studies focus on: the cross-border mobility and im/mobilisation of a vast and blurry, yet in some respects particular category of people, namely those, who (a) are marked as cultural/racial/ethnic/religious etc. others, and (b) who themselves or whose ancestors originate from a nation-state within what is considered the global south and (seek to) live in another country, often within the global north, and (c) generally find themselves in (socioeconomically/politically/legally etc.) precarious positions.¹ While there are other categories of paramount importance to the study of migration (such as gender, disability, age, etc.), I argue that race (and its proxies such as ethnicity or culture) (a), nation (b), and class (c) function as the main landmarks of the

¹ On the classed character of the label ‘migrant’ and its discursive opposition to that of the ‘expat’ see Klekowski von Koppenfels (2014), Yeung (2016), or Cranston (2017).

S. Jashari (✉)
Pädagogische Hochschule Zug, Zug, Switzerland
e-mail: Shpresa.Jashari@phzg.ch

study field. As such, I find its object of study, the migrantised other, represents a continuation of the culturalised, ethnicised, or racialised other traditionally studied by anthropology—a discipline, which, according to Lila Abu-Lughod, was “built on the historically constructed divide between the West and the non-West” (1991, p. 467). Taking Abu-Lughod’s critical reflections on culture, power and positionality into the field of migration studies, I look at the way the research practice of migrantised migration researchers “unsettles the boundary between self and other”—as Abu-Lughod put it with regard to ‘halfies’² and feminists (1991, p. 466). Today, in a world much more deeply marked by transnational mobility than when Abu-Lughod called for “Writing against Culture” over three decades ago, the question of who writes culture, how and with what consequences cannot be separated from the question who writes migration and migrants, how and with what consequences.

I follow this question, tracing how migration studies cut out and produce the required subjectivities according to a racialised, nationalised, and classed division of scientific labour: Migration researchers on one side, researched migrants on the other.³ Hence ‘migration’ and ‘migrants’ were, and dominantly continue to be, studied by scholars who themselves are not migrantised. Moreover, the latter have/had a part in that nationalisation and migrantisation, grasping, observing, interviewing and analysing people as migrants through the prism of the nation-state (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002; Dahinden, 2016; Schinkel, 2018), thus *writing* migrants. Now that more and more migrantised people are entering the field as researchers themselves, as *writing migrants*, some of the hidden, naturalised structural traits shaping it become growingly visible and debatable. And debated they are. Inspired by seminal work from feminist and postcolonial studies (Saïd, 1978; Haraway, 1988; Spivak, 1988; Abu-Lughod, 1991; Harding, 1991; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Hall, 1992; hooks, 2003; Bhabha, 2004; Ahmed, 2007, 2014; Bhabra, 2014), but also by poets such as Audre Lorde (2007), a growing number of scholars in migration and border studies interrogate the (power-) conditions under which academia functions and explore ways of decolonizing and writing research *differently* (see pioneer Behar, 1995, 1997, 2003; or, more recently, Bilge, 2020; Ghorashi, 2005, 2014; Khosravi, 2016, 2019; Ndhlovu, 2016; Rodriguez, 2018; Burluyuk & Rahbari, 2023).

A comprehensive review and systematic implementation of this important literature into migration studies’ theory-building is crucial, however it is not what this contribution offers. For its point of departure is not the scholarly knowledge produced top-down, whether canonical or critical, but the empirical knowledge gained through experiencing academia. Working out a few of the abovementioned obscured traits of the racialising (nationalising and classicising) boundary that shape migration studies (here I include border studies), I explore the ways in which this

²Abu-Lughod defines ‘halfies’ as “people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage” (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 466)—a category that opens up many questions.

³This is a simplifying binary logic for sure, yet one that is notoriously maintained in practice even when not maintainable in terms the academic ‘personnel’.

boundary is upheld in practices of producing scientific knowledge and scientificity. So, a range of formal and informal reiterative, habitualised scientific practices and norms that regulate, say, academic writing, research ethical standards or scholarly convening. To analyse and critically reflect on such aspects of ‘doing migration studies’ I employ text- and genre-analysis, auto/ethnographic and creative writing. These forms of writing, not established in academic genre, allow approaching hegemonic discourses, institutions and practices producing ‘migration studies’ from a close-up, yet distanced, de-centred epistemological vantage point.

My interest in these voices ascribed to the personal does not aim at scholarly introspection and self-reflection per se, but at making visible the apparatus of migration studies that shapes subjective experiences. My focus on everyday practices in migration studies is informed by a Foucauldian notion of governmentality and power (Foucault, 1991, 1994, 2006) and by Judith Butler’s performative understanding of subjectivation (Butler, 1989, 1997, 1999, 2010, 2011). These approaches allow conceptualising the various actions and materialities involved in ‘doing migration studies’ as a multiplex system of heterogeneous forms of power, following a common aim. To this, subjectivation is key (Agamben, 2009). Hence the subjective experience provides crucial information about the embodied governance processes at play in the functioning of that academic apparatus, producing the different subjectivities needed to ‘do’ migration studies.

Most pieces of writing that I employ here originate from the process of writing my PhD in border studies. For a long time, I saw them as byproducts to the ‘actual’ text. And even if this heteromorphic, transdisciplinary and un-disciplined writing at times threatened to subvert that official text, it was essential to my being able to go through with this academic rite of passage (which is a form of *passing*, too). It allowed me to write my way across the boundary between researched and researcher, for it gave me a voice to hold on to that sounded like ‘my own’—in a socio-spatial context where I often felt uneasy and out of place.

But before the epistemological crossing over to the role of the researcher comes the experience of being made into a research object.

2.1 Becoming a Research Object: Dissection of the Tongue

It must have been sometime during fifth or sixth grade, my first time of being seized as an object of study, in my capacity as foreigner, second generation migrant, Albanian and so on.

After the school bell rang, my teacher asked me to stay a bit longer, for a woman had come who wanted to talk to me. Already she stood in the doorway, wearing a necklace that struck me as absurd, with its giant beads made from a mash of wool or felt or something. And while she was smiling her way across the classroom and towards me, the other children trotted out, chatting, gawking at us, then leaving me behind with the two adults. After some explanations (apparently the woman sought

to find out more about ‘my mother tongue’) and some further smiles, the teacher too left or retreated behind his desk.

And the nice lady, offering me a chair (that of Ralf) and sitting down next to me (at Christoph’s spot) started her interview in the now empty classroom. She had brought with her a piece of paper, and printed on it were official looking signs and letterings as well as, I supposed, the questions she was going to ask me. As she directed them at me with a serenity and warmth, which I was aware were meant to make me feel safe, there was nothing left for me to do but to give her answers. But I was caught off guard, and the feeling of confusion and something else, something harder to grasp, lingered. It was some kind of shame, having to do with the fact that I was the only one in class she’d wanted to see. Was there something wrong with me? And what would happen if I gave a bad answer?

But she was the one asking the questions. Of which I remember only two, because they kept echoing in my head long after she spoke them out to me; long enough to become the subject of deliberation in this text. She asked: “In which language do you think?” And: “In which language do you dream?”

She gazed at me attentively, expectantly, smiling her compassionate smile. And I answered. Or rather tried to, as I had never thought about such a thing. But she had. And there she was, I am thinking—that former *I* from schooldays mingling with the linguist and social scientist I hesitantly am today—as I go back to that little scene. Here was this person, to whom it seemed to come all naturally, claiming access to the most intimate, hidden areas of my mind, my dreams even. So well hidden indeed, that I myself had been blind to the apparent conspicuousness of my inner language, to the fact that it was . . . what? Not whole, not wholesome, but split in two? I had, of course, long gotten used to the fact that some of my classmates, teachers, and people in the village where I grew up to be a foreigner in would look at me and, from the outside, see a child who was out of place, suspicious or pitiful. But now this strange gaze somehow turned around and opened up on myself from the inside. Unsettling me.

To my interviewer, however, all of this seemed to be routine and quite obvious, the asking of questions as well as the reasons for asking them. And because I did not want to admit to her that it had never occurred to me to question the linguistic workings of my own mind, I tried to speak my answers with a great deal of certainty and confidence, in an attempt to re-establish myself as the expert over myself. At least, this is how I interpret my memory of these fleeting, all in all insignificant moments, having found, over the years, some words to describe that inenarrable feeling that had taken a hold of me that day, steering my voice, hiding my surprise and my shame. Basically, at any time, a representative from some important institution could approach you in a most natural manner, casually waving an officially stamped document at you and ask you all kinds of questions. And with the self-confidence of the professional, the researcher, the local, they can shake you up and show you how little authority you have over yourself.

I remember hurrying home that late afternoon in a haze of confusion and embarrassment, trying to listen to the thoughts in my head. What language were they in? Were there really two separate languages instead of my one language, my one *voice*,

developing my thoughts and creating my world, as I'd naively felt it was? Were they still my own thoughts, even if I produced them in German? (A language that now seemed to belong to that woman, and to people *like* her, but not to me). Was she going to determine which one of my languages was my mother tongue? Would she find that my mother and my tongue had been separated? And how was it possible that my thoughts and dreams were built out of a thing as tangible as a language apparently was? A thing therefore, that some felt-necklaced expert can check in a box or take a note of. A thing—literally an object—that she can slide into her briefcase and take away with her to a place unknown and inaccessible to me.

2.2 Naming the Research Object

I liked to think that maybe now there was a book on 'migrant childrens' multilingualism' or so to be found in some library in Switzerland, holding my answers, next to those of other others, and our names. But more likely, the researcher named that piece of data and with it named me. Maybe she used a code, composed from my year of birth, my school's postal code and the date of the interview. Or maybe she chose some Albanian name she'd come across and that she thought suited me? She'd made me her creature, and as such, she got to name me.

Citing respondents using their first names is a widely accepted denomination and anonymisation practice in social sciences. And probably there are good arguments in favour of it. In referring to a respondent by their first name, we may want to emphasise that the knowledge they convey to us is biographic. Or that we would like to think of ourselves as their friend or confidant (strengthening our legitimacy as narrators of their story). But what seeps through this conception too, is the view that we are in the realm of the personal here, and not of the professional. By contrast, researchers are habitually mentioned by their full names (and sometimes we even find an initial, like a distinguishing beauty mark in between their first and last name!). And what is more, the high/er status of their knowledge actually demands an unmistakable citation. As an author, citing other authors, I am anything but free to play around with and create alternative, fictional names for them. Such a thing is not open to debate and would be perceived as an outrageous breach of a key principle in research ethics. Clearly, ethical principles, just like the naming tradition within academia, are distributed according to a researcher–researched divide, with anonymity issues being irrelevant in the case of the former (except for blind-reviewing), while issues of author's rights and research honesty have gained ground.

Sure, these research ethical principles have been established for a reason. But they are no self-evident, indisputable givens. As any part of academic apparatus and practices, they are designed in a certain way to facilitate particular goals. Moreover, aside the official goals of these structures and practices, there are also the more hidden effects to consider, if we want to understand the production of academic knowledge and of 'scientificity'.

So let us shed a contrasting light at these research ethical norms, at some of the effects they have on the production of those named differently: On one side we see the full names, and sometimes just the last names of public, well-known (subject-) voices of scholars whose publicity and prestige increases with every mentioning. On the other side, we find the (object-)voices of those conceptualised as personal, authentic, and vulnerable, with their names remaining hidden behind a fictitious personal name for the sake of protection (which, true, can be so important). But, viewed in this contrasting light, we may also ask: What does it mean, that some people can make a name for themselves by writing about nameless migrantised others? What does it facilitate, apart from the researcher's career and, maybe, raising awareness about inequalities? And does it matter at all, who *in particular* lived through and narrated an experience that is recounted by a migration scholar?

Certainly, the academic work of re-narrating and analysing that account, maybe even making it heard, deserves recognition. And not only does the academic voice possess the authority necessary to do this work but it is itself in no need of the kind of protective anonymisation, as the voices of those bearing witness sometimes are. Because the academic voice stands not as vulnerable, futile, and at times shaky, but as a solid structure of text that is well founded on an entire complex of other texts. As such, it can give shelter to that other/ed. *human* voice, citing its grassroots experience, marking it off and freezing it inside those little indented blocks in smaller font size, thus

creating an excerpt of something resembling the *real world*, an authentic voice stemming from that world. But the repetition of this binary composition of voices, migrant experiencer/non-migrant analyst, results in something resembling a border, a boundary that runs between 'data' and 'analysis', between researcher and researched. The interview-excerpt renders visible the established labour division in migration studies on the level of the text, re-enacting and reaffirming that divide formally, while attributing different functions and values to these differently represented voices.

In us as readers, this hierarchising division activates a particular hermeneutic process, inviting us to differentiate between objects vs. subjects of study. So, this is how the standardised drawing of a textual boundary (aimed at facilitating clarity and intersubjective reliability) effectuates a hierarchisation of voices. This othering writing technique suddenly marks off, unintendedly maybe but essentialisingly so, one group of (nationalised, racialised, classed) subjectivities on this side of the boundary from another group of (most probably differently nationalised, racialised, classed) subjectivities on that side of the same boundary.

This is one way of thinking about the effects of denominating and writing migrants. There are others. Also, it won't lever out long-established research ethical norms, mainly because the fact of the separation of voices in academic knowledge production remains, no matter how I choose to name and cite people. Ultimately, there *are* those voices, words, languages etc. that figure as data in migration studies. And as long as we use the knowledge of other/ed. people as data, as long as we do not ascribe analytical capacities to their voices, giving authorial power to them, giving research jobs to them too, there is no escape from this dilemma. The way things are now, my voice as a researcher unites authorship and interpretational authority over the voices from which I draw.

But as somebody who is still unaccustomed to participating in scientific migration discourses *and* as somebody biographically positioned within the ‘group’ of the studied, I am experiencing the at times painful contradictions that come with having “joined the table” while still being “on the menu”, as Sirma Bilge puts it (Bilge, 2020).

That pain can emanate from the realisation that it is completely irrelevant, whether I call somebody by their first name, writing, for instance ‘. . . as Shpresa mentions in the beginning of her narrative, her father had moved to Switzerland as a ‘saisonnier’ . . .’ or whether I say ‘. . . as Shpresa J. mentions . . .’ or, further anonymised, ‘as Ramize mentions . . .’ or ‘as Ramize T. mentions . . .’, Shpresa can never produce anything but a mere stream of data, as long as she refers to knowledge coming from her own so-called migratory experience. This is so, even if she has some reflection or other to offer along with it; even if those reflections may be interesting, original, or in some way serviceable to me as a researcher. Her voice remains one of many; her name exchangeable. It is only as a researcher, that she, now named Shpresa Jashari, may be able to carry her voice across the boundary separating the researched from the researching. But, even if she does manage to pass over, the order of things in migration studies will not be touched. The boundary remains intact, and many more voices like hers, but different, remain on the other side of it, kept in place as first hand, second generation, third country, third world and whatnot kinds of raw data. For the boundary is a structural trait of migration studies.

Still, I believe that writing habits, narrative patterns, genre and style norms etc., as the particular ways in which we do and do not, in which we can and cannot put our (and not our) words together in a ‘scientific’ text are worth paying closer attention to than is currently the case in migration studies and social sciences more broadly.⁴ The highly standardised and controlled forms of writing (migration) research that have become the almost unquestioned norm in academia have implications on research ethical, analytical and epistemological aspects in the production of what is considered (legitimate) knowledge.

In the following I will further reflect on academic genre by writing about my experience of learning how to write academically, making analytical use of my particular standpoint (Haraway, 1988). I will employ a creative and rhizomatic approach (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to detect and trace the traditional hierarchical tree- or body-structure of the genre, as is taught, for instance, in academic writing courses.

⁴Moreover, one could argue, that following such an interest in matters of writing is hardly possible under the high productivity pressure of neoliberal academia, in which such dealings with the meta-level of knowledge production may appear as a ‘nice to have’ rather than a vital part of research, to both researchers and funding institutions. I wonder if these conditions of the high standardisation of scientific genres (especially represented in the strictly regulated text of the research article) privilege a notion of knowledge as ‘content’, as accumulable good rather than as a ‘practice’.

2.3 Writing Academically

My ideas of what an academic text is and how it is to be written have, for the most part, not been explicitly taught to me. Instead, they seemed to have seeped in *en passant*. As I was writing my thesis, I felt that those ideas were not compatible with my writing, for I was not able to assume or hold the generic speaking position of ‘the academic’. A position, it seemed to me, that was hovering somewhere above ‘the field’ like the off-voice in a documentary.

What I observed during these moments when my voice would fail to take up this particular tone (that I thought of as academic) was that I would either fall silent or fall ‘back’ into what I started to call my ‘other writing’. Or reversely, I would write in ‘my’ way and then fall silent because I felt that this kind of writing had no place in an academic text. This silencing effect, I think, has a lot to do with the particular positionalities at play on all sides involved in the study of migration.

So, writing ‘academically’ does not come easily to me. I find it hard to gain authority over the text, often feeling blocked. The grave voices of the thousandsevenhundredandeightytwo brilliant authors who have already written about my topics start weighing down on me from somewhere high above, and my voice falls silent. That voice to consider ‘my own’ seems to bring disorder into things rather than clarify them. More than that, I suspect it stems from a place of disorder, both incapable and unwilling to be contained by the boundaries of the academic genre.

(I am well aware that there is no singular academic genre; instead, a plurality of academic styles exists. However, knowing that did not help accelerate my writing process. And a lot of time can pass before one encounters that plurality in research literature.)

By now, I have managed to make my peace with this silencing effect, considering it a part and parcel of academic writing. And I try to take it into account in terms of time management. Although I suspect that I am far from being the only one to struggle with this kind of thing, I can only speak for myself, personally.

(And I can already hear some of those voices awaken, objecting from somewhere high up: *Stop it! Science is not about you, personally! It's about the research-object—ahm, subject.*)

Anyway, I shrug them off and keep wonder why other types of writing—journalistic, essayistic, or literary—have such a different effect on me. The (creative) process of writing a piece for some blog or magazine usually lifts my spirits and empowers me. Clearly, this difference has a lot to do with the specific, highly regulated types of texts that are the norm within today’s academia, especially when it comes to journal articles; a peer-reviewed norm to be fulfilled in order to publish, publish, and publish some more. (And if you’re not maintaining that rhythm, you’re likely to be doing it wrong.) An austere, quasi-objective style dominates the genre, following clear-cut, mostly pre-given, hierarchical text structures and an (ideally) hermetic argumentation. All of this is supported by heavy bodies of literature, which barely allow for you, the newcomer, to dip your inexperienced academic toe into

one of those miraculous things called *research gaps*.⁵ One might say, it's not easy to write at an academic level. True.

But there's something else; and it was during a PhD workshop on research positionality, held at a prestigious, old university in Germany, when I figured out what that something is. It has to do with the fact that I am what could be considered a migrant entering the field of migration studies.

(And to that point too, some of the voices from above have substantial objections: *Yes, but how can you make sure to remain objective, then?* And another one: *What is it with this recent trend? I see it more and more these days: students, writing papers on topics that they are personally affected by . . . migrants researching migrants. . . . anthropologists studying their own ethnic groups and countries of origin . . . or dealing with local, Western contexts. . . . I doubt it is possible to see things clearly without the necessary distance.*)

(That I can challenge easily, jokingly: *So, then you should probably turn to women's studies. For how could you, as a man, ever have enough distance to other men to justify doing ethnographies on them?!*)

(But then, from some unexpected direction, a voice comes at me, this time in German and uttered in a dry, matter-of-fact tone, serving me with the following composite words, casually inserted into some dependent clause in the way only the German language can: . . . *wie diese Art der Betroffenheitsforschung etwa in den Kulturwissenschaften gezeigt hat . . .*)⁶

Of course! There can be no claim to objectivity in science, and certainly not in social sciences. There may be those who can disappear more easily inside the choir of default scientific voices, obscuring their particular positionalities, but as to the claim of objectivity, of course it does not uphold. This topic has been thoroughly deconstructed and critiqued by many recognised voices within academia, especially by feminist thinkers (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991; hooks, 2003, 2014; Ahmed, 2007, 2014; Gorton, 2007).

(And despite all of these 'of courses,' that annihilating side remark on '*Betroffenheitsforschung*' and the general suspicion did just that: annihilate my voice. Forming a secret union with this or that experience and this or that everyday observation, it managed to negate the possibility of my authority, and hence authorship, in matters *affecting me*.)

(*'Me', in this case would be somebody with one of those 'cultures' usually studied 'in den Kulturwissenschaften', as opposed to those cultures that aren't cultures in the sense that they are left to the sciences unneeding of further specification such as sociology.*)

But where does all of that legitimising and annihilating power come from? How can it fit into the fragment of a sentence? It's not like that speaker held me by the

⁵Such 'fill in the gap' figure of thinking in neoliberal academic discourse is a big issue to reflect on in itself: How can we hope to get to a deeper understanding and innovation in research, if we keep imagining knowledge as this wall, into which this or that missing brick can be inserted, but which cannot be considered tearing down and rebuilding, if we find that it is not built on solid ground?

⁶"...as this kind of ,research out of affectedness' has shown for instance in cultural studies..."

throat. At least not physically. I just know that when I first heard it uttered—not directed at me personally but at a whole lecture hall of students—I could not imagine how to counter that notion’s validity without my voice or face carrying any signs of hurt or anger giving away that I was, indeed, *affected*. Delivering myself to that hegemonic Western male—pardon my labelling, but he made sure that no doubt could arise in that respect, applying all of the necessary paraphernalia such as suit and tie, comfortable leaning position at the lectern, self-assured tone and volume of voice etc. So, delivering myself to him as the self-fulfilment of his prophecy seemed, at the time, an inevitable outcome of raising my hand. I could only add shame and more anger to the emotions standing in the way of the objectivity of my scientific voice.

So I remained silent, with a storm cloud of bits and pieces of sentences on my notepad, where my respectful but challenging comment to him should have been. He on the other hand left the lecture hall, unaffected and consistently self-assured, heading to his next important appointment. (Yes, of course he was carrying a leather briefcase; however, not the glossy, black managerial kind, but the brown suede college-kind.)

This is more or less how the fact of my ‘migrancy’ has come to interfere, every now and again, with my role as a ‘migration scholar’ in the course of my academic formation, at times executing an irrational amount of power over my ability to write, think, and act ‘academically’.

At the same time, experiences like these have strengthened my wish to write, think, and be in that field, with ‘my’ voice going astray, de-centring my work. These reflexive narrative rabbit holes that I kept digging into the ‘actual academic text’ of my thesis at times seriously threatened to bring down the entire writing project—and jeopardise my access to the highly gated academic community. Yet I could not find an easy way out of that epistemological struggle, one against hair-thin and hardly visible power threads, made of a subtle, subjective fabric rather than the object-quality of facts. When I tried to objectify my struggle by pinning down that delicate patch of fabric with the weight of scientific argument, the whole thing was sure to rip. So why bother discuss all that personal stuff, now that the academic work is finally done?

For one, because students of mine continue to tell me about revising their papers in a way that at least partly deletes their personal voices from the text, just as I used to: “~~ich zeige auf, dass es zeigt sich, dass . . .~~”, “~~ich bin mir nicht sicher, ob die Annahme ist nicht gesichert, dass . . .~~“, etc. ~~Which is to say~~ This is why I think, that we continue to learn these objectifying techniques, even if unconsciously, and therefore we must continue to think about them, too, and delete, where ~~need be~~ we find it necessary.

To put it more generally, this is why the epistemological ‘of courses’ require continuing attention and scrutiny in scientific everyday practice, precisely because of their long-established theoretical hold. Or at least that is what I conclude from being haunted by that officially bygone division into binaries: subjective versus objective, emotion versus reason, personal versus professional, researched versus researching. The way we think, write, and act as researchers is shaped by much

more than just state-of-the-art literature, the textbook-rules and notorious power play in academia. It is just as much formed by the fine, opaque and much harder to grasp web of soft power lines. And one thread that is particularly central in structuring that web when it comes to migration studies, is again the essentialising division of researchers and researched.

2.4 Migrants and Research: The Myth of ‘Objectivity vs. Affectedness’ Is Alive!

My aim in writing about migrantised migration researchers is not to reflect on how their writing might be different from that of non-migrantised migration researchers. It is to get closer to the normalised, invisibilised structures and practices producing ‘default migration studies’. The question of what becomes visible, when some of those who were customarily written about start writing themselves, is not new.

When Virginia Woolf was invited to speak about ‘Women and Fiction’ at a very old and prestigious British university almost a century ago, as she describes in her famous essay (Woolf, 1945, p. 5), she reasoned about the possible expectations of her hosts. Did they want her to consider ‘women and what they are like’? Or ‘women and the fiction that they write’? Or ‘women and the fiction that is written about them’? Or, instead, how ‘all three are [somehow] inextricably mixed together’?

Woolf discarded these questions altogether, pointing to the impossibility of ever being able to answer them. An elegant and humble way of saying: “What you all are so interested in seems irrelevant to me”. She then steered the audience’s/reader’s attention towards her perspective on the matter, namely that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (Woolf, 1945, p. 5f).

The parallel to ‘migrants and research’ is obvious: There are inequalities that keep migrants from writing research, just as there were (and are) with regard to women writing fiction—and that’s that. So what is there left to discuss, once you have finally arrived in academia? As a migrant migration researcher, you should go ahead and do what all reasonable migration researchers would: research that migration already! At this point, unequal access should not really be a topic anymore. (Unless, of course, it is the actual topic of your research project, based on interviews with other migration researchers with *migrant backgrounds*, investigated by you, the *migrant* researcher, about their experiences of entering academia.)

This is to say that for experience to become knowledge, or for knowledge to become scientific, it needs to be “purified” as a result of its passage through the “magical frontier” between the researched and the researchers (borrowing from Bourdieu’s (2000, p. 169) notion of the magical frontier between the dominant and the dominated). This frontier further coincides with the divide between emic and etic in anthropology, or that between object-language and meta-language in linguistics. The apparatus of knowledge production relies on this (again: normalised) division, facilitating the alchemic transformation of (subjective) everyday knowledge

into (objectified) scientific knowledge. This implicitly racialised practice of scientification⁷ is commonly legitimised by arguments of ‘intersubjective reliability’ and ‘comparability’. However, the objectivity-assumption continues to cling to these arguments, too: Knowledge that is ‘collected’ from a community by the initiative and with the authority of outside agents seems to be considered more ‘objective’ than similar knowledge that is made available by members of that community themselves.

If the scientific practice of dividing knowledge into subjective and objective knowledge persists, the knowledge of migrantised communities remains accessible to research only through the researcher-subject positioned outside ‘the field’. Only then does this knowledge become scientific currency. A currency the ‘objective’ researcher (normalised as *white*) can work with as well as the ‘affected’ migrantised researcher can, once the latter has learnt to cut out these ‘subjective’ parts of their knowledge from their writing and assume the default researcher’s gaze.

So the division of research subject and research object continues to figure as a basis for knowledge production in social sciences, and in a particular way those dealing with societal ‘others’. The central argumentative movement resulting from such binarisation is the deictic gesture that refers from one set of information to another, and thus needs two differing points, A and B, in order to actually point (from A to B, habitually). Can B point at itself or is such deixis condemned to fail from the outset? But intriguing as geometry may be, researchers are humans, not points.

(And if they were points, one would have to argue: There are no points, no dots. If you zoom in on them from very close up, you’ll only find a blur, a whole landscape of points . . .)

But aside this formal subjective/objective binary opposition facilitating scientification, one needs to consider the specific meanings ascribed to these categories, one key ascription to the former being emotion—as opposed to the rationality ascribed to science.

For much of the history of “Western” (social) science, emotions were positioned as an “epistemological other” (Somers & Gibson, 2007). They were relegated to the losing side of the binary oppositions that structured intellectual life and work, and placed “beyond the pale” of social scientific endeavour. Yet, when we probe a little deeper, it turns out that many of the well-known theorists of power, from Hobbes to Gramsci, from Lukes to Giddens and from Elias to Foucault, let emotions play a significant yet largely unacknowledged “underlabouring” role in their work. (Heaney, 2013, p. 355)

I figure, when even these “well-known theorists of power” and, it seems unnecessary for Heaney to mention, these well-settled men “let emotions play a significant [...] role in their work”, why shouldn’t I? Consequently, I will stop worrying about

⁷Initially and intuitively I had used the term ‘practices of scientific hygiene’ to describe this process—inspired by the term “Verbal Hygiene” coined by socio-linguist Deborah Cameron (2012). However, as it can be easily misunderstood, I changed terminology, even though the pointed character of the former notion has helped me see more clearly and conceptually grasp the hidden, normalised aspects of racialisation inherent to academic practice.

the unseemly personal, at times emotional, voice that has continued to subvert my academic writing and working. And try to make visible the “underlabouring”.

So let us, finally, get to the above-mentioned PhD workshop on research positionality, held at a prestigious, old university in Germany. It is there where the penny dropped.

2.5 On (the Impossibility of) Passing from Researched to Researcher

The workshop at this diversity research institute was held in the spacious, awe-inspiring library hall of the anthropology department. Our bodies, arranged on chairs on the ground floor, were surrounded front, left, and right by two (or even three?) floors of books—red, blue, green, grey etc. And, even though I have probably made that up, all of those books had golden embossing on their spines.

During the first day, I watched one contributor after the other take up their spot amidst this dignified scholarly scenery. Their bodies, as if instinctively reaching for the tiny remote control of the projector, seemed to be comfortable with or at least prepared to assume that spot foreseen for them: front-centre, slightly to the right, in between the shiny, dark wooden lectern and the university and institute banner. It showed the contours of an old thinker’s (or Greek god’s?) profile, with the name of the university printed in Greek (or Latin?) lettering, while the institute was represented by means of some more contemporary, dynamic graphic insignia. (Later I observed, that the cups from which we got to drink our coffee were imprinted with that same logo.)

While I had been a little intimidated by that scenery upon first entry, I eventually felt that my body, too, would be able to withstand its grandeur during the half hour of my presentation on the second day of the workshop.

This, however, started to change as I went on listening to scholarly confessions of how power hierarchies in the field had been detected and researchers’ privileged positions revealed. And it is not that I did not have similar observations to make myself (for instance the episode from my research stay in Kosova, when my friend’s father became my driver, the little red car broke down and economic inequalities were exposed).

But the point is that the entire discussion on positionality seemed to basically be one-directional in terms of power relations, with the researcher notoriously in the position of power and privilege. These reflections on power resembled an act of atonement, and the researcher’s self-exposure gestured a penance. This type of ‘reflections on research positionality’ has become a standard section/chapter in migration literature and recognising ones’ power-position a quality-requirement. This is valid in a field addressing social inequality. Yet, although eventually one might come across authors making a point about the fact that (mobility) researchers

can just as well find themselves in a hierarchically subordinate position vis-à-vis their respondents, the general trend indicates the reverse direction.

An example of such scholarly self-reflection:

It follows that this (class, gendered) background thinking unconsciously influences the process of knowledge production. (Allen, 2005, p. 989)

And another one, emphasising...:

... the myriad ways in which the researcher's own class history and current class position both advantage and disadvantage the research process, often in unpredictable ways. (Mellor et al., 2014, p. 135)

Of course, my power-assessment as a researcher is in no way neutral. But I strongly felt that what I had been struggling with during the years of my academic apprenticeship had not primarily been my feeling bad in the face of my 'less privileged respondents'. What had kept me up at night, and what had kept me from writing and opening my mouth at conferences etc. had been my feeling bad in the face of 'academia'. So I wanted to scream into the faces of poor Allen (2005) and Mellor et al. (2014):

You know what else unconsciously influences knowledge production and disadvantages the research process?! The fact of not getting into academia in the first place! (Jashari, 2025, p. 30)

Uttering such a statement was, of course, impossible and pointless. It would only reveal, once more, how I was an 'affected' person instead of a 'professional' one.

So, I just continued to sit on that chair in the German university, pretending to listen and pretending to belong, not knowing what to do with the powerlessness and anger that took turns in distracting me. And inside that cathedral of books, with the voice of somebody *unlike* me washing over my ears, I got briefly overwhelmed with a sense that it had not been constructed to accommodate 'people like me'. Or perhaps 'people like me' had actually not been constructed to fit comfortably into such grand places.

Feeling too stirred up to listen to anything anymore that was spoken in the auditorium, I took my discomfort outside. And closing the doors to the ongoing positionality debate in the luminous hall behind me, I stepped into the dimly lit corridors of the anthropology department and diversity research institute.

They were quiet, devoid of people. That is, except for those in the photographs displayed on the walls. I looked at them, one by one, wandering further away from the presentation hall and deeper into some corridor. There were almost exclusively people of colour on display, many of them in generic, mostly rural settings far from the German university: A priest and some other men attending a Christian funeral ('African'), an elderly man standing on a boat with a fishing net in his calloused hands ('Asian'), a woman in her forties selling fruit at the city market ('Eastern-European'?), some boys in washed-out shirts playing football ((Central-?) 'Asian'), a sorcerer of sorts ('African'), a group of young women dancing topless ('African').

It felt like I had already seen every one of those photographs before. And so, I wanted, at least, to educate my generic gaze and silence my sense of guilt by

learning about the exact places and times they had been taken. Only to find that there were no exact dates, sometimes not even the year, indicated on the labels below, nor the specific places, let alone the names of the displayed individuals. Apparently, I had wandered off into the one ahistorical, dark part of the grand historical university building.

In the evening, back at the hotel, I went through the portfolio provided by the organisers. Printed on every item inside it were the two logos from the banner (the scholarly Greek-ish head etc.) And then, suddenly, two postcards fell out of the portfolio, showing on their front sides two of the photos I had seen on my wanderings earlier (the funeral-scene and the dancers). The backside of the postcard, unlike the exposition, declared the localities and times of photographing in a small font size (not the names, though). On its right side, there were the faint grey address lines, while on the upper left side, once more, was the old, scholarly head and the Latin or Greek name of the university. It was then and there that it hit me: the researchers and the researched are two sides of the same coin.

I immediately knew to whom I would send one of those postcards: my friend Julia Schmid. She had accompanied me on my journey of becoming an activist and researcher, and often she had listened to me complain about how I get invited to speak at migration- and 'integration'-related events in order to provide an exemplary insight about 'being Albanian', 'being a Muslim woman' and so on. And how all the while, these inviting parties would show little consideration for the fact that I was not only 'affected' by but also an 'expert' on migration. They would ask me, for instance, to 'just go ahead and make my talk a bit personal' or insist on my giving 'concrete examples from personal experience', or 'taken from real life'. After having felt the growing need for a seat at those tables for years, once I'd gotten there, I realised that the expectations these (expressly well-meaning) people had towards me were related to my opening up 'about the true nature of migrant', to say it with Woolf. Or, with Bilge, that I was on their menu. They did not expect me to consider structural dimensions (for that, they usually invited a male *white* researcher to the panel). What they booked me for was my personal voice, my 'street credibility', allowing the (Swiss) integration-professionals to get a glimpse of the authentic migrant life world. As students, we had often discussed such 'objectivation' of migrantised voices with Julia (she was enrolled in Anthropology, I was a student of German Linguistics and Literature). Later, with my entry into social sciences, our discussion on positionality took another turn.

Now, it was the repression of the personal voice in an arena deemed 'professional' that had started to bother me. I had discovered this, for instance, at a conference on social networks in Spain, where I met many interesting, highly educated people. Some of them had grown up in places outside 'the West', and a few, like me, as 'foreigners' in a European country. But when I asked them where they were from, they would tell me, for instance, that they 'were based in London'. And when they, in turn, asked me that same question, I knew better than to say: 'I'm originally Albanian, from Macedonia, living in Switzerland'. To them it was my 'academic affiliation' that mattered, not some vile biographic blueprint that people like me were usually asked about—being *migrants* out there in the real world and not

mobiles or expats. This became particularly clear when during a plenary session on the last day of the conference a network chart was presented, highlighting all of the places where the conference participants had come from. North Macedonia was not among them.

Later, my friend Julia (who now, like me, has two small children and a real job) was still there to listen to me complain about writing troubles; about how I am not comfortable taking on that generic academic tone; about how, telling from the great majority of research literature, there seems to be an imperative to restrict personal appearances of the author to acknowledgements, the occasional introductory anecdote, and the chapter on positionality, of course; about how the production of scientificity seemed to be racialised and about/

This is when dear Julia, probably sick of it all, cut through my sentence and got real with me: “But what is it you actually want? Being asked to speak personally makes you uncomfortable, and when you are finally asked to speak as a researcher, that’s no good either?!”

Now, here was a question.

It had stayed with me for years, and there in that German hotel room, I was suddenly able to write down an answer to her, to me. It fit on the back of the postcard:

Dear Julia,

It’s one and the same thing! The discomfort of having to speak in a personal voice in one context, and a strictly professional one in the other...

See: The objective (*white!*) researcher is not on display but hidden inside academia; the card provides space for them to fill with their words, backed up and elevated by wise, elderly ancient Greeks. While ‘young women (of Colour!), dancing’ in the front need no name nor say; their bodies provide the stuff to look at, study, and maybe save.

The unmarked researcher and the researched other: two sides of the same coin, held together by means of division; banning the latter to an object-position while vesting an objective voice to the former.

Hugs and kisses,

Shpresa

P.S.: I cut one of the young women’s faces out and glued it to the back of the card, atop the old Greek’s head—bringing disorder to the border! 😊

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Chapter 3

Unsettling Normalisation Through Strong Reflexivity: Engaged Scholarship's Co-creating Practices Toward Refugees' Inclusion in the Netherlands



Elena Ponzoni, Halleh Ghorashi, and Maria Rast

3.1 Introduction

As the number of forced migrants seeking safe haven around the world reaches unprecedented levels, the need for academic knowledge that contributes to their durable societal inclusion is growing. This calls for engaged research that creates reflexive connections between different types of knowledge, starting with that of migrant communities. Co-creative research methods can open up spaces for knowing and learning which are meaningful to those often excluded from knowledge production (Lenette, 2019). Investing in the co-production of knowledge with refugee communities, in connection to other societal stakeholders, is crucial for critically examining the premises of societal and political approaches to refugee reception and inclusion and the societal impact of knowledge frames (Rast, 2021). Yet, consolidated academic conventions and historically rooted research practices do not always create contexts which encourage co-creative research and engaged methodologies. This chapter focuses on attempts to create more space for these methodologies in the Dutch research landscape, when it comes to research on forced migration and the position of forced migrants in Dutch society.

The Netherlands presents a history of marginalization of critical participatory research and critical research originating from within racialized groups, including migrants and refugees, as we will elaborate here. In recent years, renewed attention has emerged for the need of centering the experience and knowledges of people with lived refugee experiences and connect them with other knowledges and perspectives, spurring efforts to work with co-creative methodologies that combat

E. Ponzoni (✉) · H. Ghorashi
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
e-mail: e.ponzoni@vu.nl; h.ghorashi@vu.nl

M. Rast
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

epistemic injustices and engage actively with communities and civil society. In this context, we initiated a platform called Refugee Academy. This initiative was launched in 2017 to bring together existing academic, professional and local knowledge on different themes concerning refugee inclusion. Through recurring meetings and research projects in co-creation with societal partners, it aims to build an infrastructure that reinforces the learning, reflective and practical capacities of different stakeholders.

This chapter describes three different projects conducted in Refugee Academy, which show a chained effort to create reciprocal connections between differently positioned actors and create knowledge that is rooted in their experiences. It contextualizes this effort in the historical background of Dutch research on (forced) migrants to show why these forms of engaged scholarship are needed. By juxtaposing different research projects that centre perspectives of three type of actors (refugee advocates, civic initiatives and scholars doing engaged research on forced migration), we picture possibilities of academia to contribute to transforming existing exclusionary structures and facilitate rethinking conditions for inclusion.

In the Netherlands, research on (forced) migrants in the past decades has been highly intertwined with policy and is generally used to support and strengthen existing policies (Essed & Nimako, 2006; Entzinger & Scholten, 2015). Many scholars adopt a quantitative research approach, explaining the societal and economic exclusion of migrants through an individualistic frame as being due to their own deficits in resources and human capital (e.g. De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Dourleijn et al., 2011; Bakker et al., 2016b). Poor language skills, low education, lack of local diplomas and work experience, cultural differences, traumas and limited social networks have all been identified as factors that diminish migrant's chances to participate in the labor market, in education and in society as a whole (Dourleijn et al., 2011; Engbersen et al., 2015; Huijnk et al., 2017). Some studies also provide societal explanations but focus mainly on visible sources of exclusion, such as discrimination, or contextual factors, such as the impact of long periods of inactivity and insecurity while awaiting asylum procedures (Engbersen et al., 2015; Bakker et al., 2016a). These explanations are echoed in policies, which focus mainly on altering individuals or affecting broader societal indicators.

Missing in this dominant research-policy nexus (Scholten, 2011) is the impact of subtle sources of exclusion based on dominant discourses that are ingrained in societal practices and cannot be captured through quantitative studies. In addition, such studies based on quantitative methods are often "objectifying the difference between 'migrants' and 'non-migrants'" (Amelina, 2022, p. 3) and claiming neutrality. There are three problems with this approach. First, non-migrant native populations are approached as a homogenous category and as the norm to which other groups, mainly non-white migrants, are compared. Second, the claim of neutrality ignores the impact of normalized discursive power in the researchers' approach and choices. Third, these reports often present a hierarchy of success for various non-white minority groups compared to the native white population, mainly based on the (lack of) achievements of the groups themselves, instead of providing a layered analysis of societal and institutional forms of racism as a structural problem of exclusion. If

discrimination is mentioned, it is barely analysed as something structural or institutional.

Critical scholars using quantitative methodology or mix-methods have been increasingly addressing the limitations of categorizations (Spierings, 2023) and experimenting with analytical categories (see Mazzucato, Chap. 12, in this volume). Critical qualitative studies show that even when the intention is to include refugees in organizations, schools or societal initiatives, invisible forms of exclusion might be at play, existing in the unreflective reproduction of taken-for-granted discourses and practices (Ghaemina et al., 2017; Ponzoni et al., 2017; Rast & Ghorashi, 2018; Blankvoort et al., 2021). However, the impact of these critical studies seems limited because, within the Dutch public discourse, refugees are still most prominently portrayed as either dangerous or lacking resources (Daalmans et al., 2020; Ghorashi, 2021; Pozzo, 2022; De Jong, 2023). Liisa Malkki's work from the mid-1990s critiques the pathologizing of refugees in research and policy. She discusses the "sedentarist bias" that views refugees as anomalies and space invaders, leading to their paternalization and pathologization. Refugees are seen as either vulnerable and pitiful or dangerous and abnormal. Recent public and political discourse increasingly portrays refugees as dangerous, immoral, and irresponsible. Gray and Franck (2019) note a shift in British media post-2015, where refugees are seen as a risk, influenced by gendered and racialized logic. In European media reports "refugeeness" has been connected to a lack of morality and loyalty (particularly the racialized othering of refugees and migrants with an Islamic background) in the context of rising nationalism in the West (Brenner & Ohlendorf, 2016). The reports showed both paternalization of refugee women and pathologizing of refugee men.

The image of danger and the focus on deficits can create hierarchical relationships between locals and newcomers and thereby feed the self-other gap (Ghorashi, 2014; Bakker et al., 2016b; see also Fischer, Chap. 13, in this volume). In a system with longstanding and multiple structural inequalities, dominant exclusionary discourses are hegemonic and power relations often influence people's behavior unconsciously (Young, 2001). Thus, in the current context of European societies, especially ones, like the Netherlands, with a recent past as strong welfare states, scholars need to imagine forms of research that allow for reflexivity on the actions of different types of social actors. These include actors who risk becoming complicit with exclusionary structures despite their intention to be inclusive and to increase equality, as well as those who risk becoming marginalized despite an institutional context designed to counter marginalization.

We therefore argue for the need of critically engaged scholarships. With this we mean research that centers reciprocity to disrupt exploitative relations in knowledge production, that follows principles of democratization and decolonization of knowledge by centering communities' needs and lived experiences using participatory methods, and that is committed to social change. In this chapter we will focus on the possibility of this type of scholarship to enable "strong reflexivity" (Harding, 1993). As we will explain, this is an essential condition for unsettling taken-for-granted discourses and practices that result in refugees' exclusion and reducing the unintended complicity of academics to these discourses and practices.

Refugee Academy seeks possibilities to learn together bringing a variety of perspectives and horizons together, enabling thinking and doing from openness to the perspectives of others. It strives for what Puig de la Bellacasa as described as “thinking with”: standing for sustainable and vital relations that create conditions for a collective of knowledge creators, taking marginalized epistemologies as point of departure (see also Bartels et al., Chap. 4, in this volume). This means embracing vulnerability and interdependency in academia in relation to knowledges of communities, engaging with a diversity of knowledges through, adding layers of knowledge so that knowing becomes thicker than it initially was (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 201).

The initiative was based at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and grew through the active involvement of a large group of people engaged with forced migration in the Netherlands. This included people with refugee background—mostly active in organizations and refugee-led groups—civil society organizations, local and national policymakers, NGO’s and researchers (both with and without refugee experience). They were invited regularly to thematic meetings inside and outside university, in which specific societal issues were discussed from different perspectives (rooted in experiential, professional or academic knowledge). They participated to several “masterclasses” in which personal and professional experiences were related to theoretical knowledge. Also, between 2017 and 2024 the Refugee Academy conducted seven different research projects in collaboration with refugee communities and other players in the field.¹

Some of the participants in our projects reject the label refugee because of its essentialist and negative connotations in the public sphere, while others adopt it deliberately, particularly in their effort to change Dutch the discourse around “refugeeness”. Despite our awareness of this sensitivity and the homogenizing danger of the term, our choice of the title Refugee Academy was inspired by the efforts of refugee advocates active in our projects, and resonating with Malkki (1992), who has shown that refugee-ness can have a distinct positive aspect, referring to a particular exilic positionality. In using the term refugee, we adopted a strategic essentialism (inspired by feminist scholars, see Oseen, 1997) that has enabled us to address specific challenges affecting this group, which at times significantly differs from other migrant groups.

In the following, we first elaborate our theoretical assumptions and contextualize our case into the Dutch academic field around (forced) migration, then we present three Refugee Academy research projects that explore the challenges and opportunities of societal actors with different positions in enhancing refugee inclusion. Last, we show how the synergy of these perspectives provides opportunities to unsettle the normalizing power of exclusion through strong reflexivity.

¹ See also: <https://vu.nl/en/research/more-about/refugee-academy-our-projects>

3.2 Normalizing Power and Strong Reflexivity

The immense power of many othering practices in Europe lies in their invisibility, their normalizing capacity and their ability to become part of the taken-for-granted practices of everyday life. In late modern societies, power is more often present in invisible forms of normalization than in visible forms of domination (Bauman, 2000). This subtle power works through the routinization and normalization of everyday practices, blinding us to the ways that we become complicit in reproducing structures of exclusion and (socioeconomic, racial and ethnic) positions of inequality. Every choice we make as individuals “always implicate[s] the positions from which we speak or write—the positions of enunciation” (Hall, 1990, p. 222). These positions are located in particular time- and context-specific discourses. So, although the power of discursive practices affects everyone, its impact is dependent on individuals’ positioning regarding the intersection of discourses. Contrasting these differences in discursive positionings provides a basis for challenging the normalizing impact of the dominant discourses at play.

Strong reflexivity (Harding, 1993, pp. 70–71) resulting from intersubjective negotiations of contrasting positionalities provides a particularly interesting angle on agency. Strong reflexivity is about seeing individuals (including the researcher) in relation to each other from their situatedness in particular histories and communities. This means engaging with how multiple locations and positionalities intersect and considering how these specific intersections allow people to challenge the ways that normalized constructions of self and other are reproduced. Thus, possibilities emerge to defer from the dominant hierarchical categorizations of self and other.

Given this critical notion of power, Refugee Academy has aimed to design *daring in-between spaces* as alternative spaces for reflection and action that enable strong reflexivity. This notion draws on the work of Black feminists who described the importance of *safe spaces* where Black women in the US could find each other and forge alternative narratives, imaginations and inspirations for the future, countering dominant negative images of Black American women and re-enabling the epistemic value of specific experiences and knowledges. They used the diversity and richness of their experiences to produce such stories without the pressure of conforming to norms (Collins, 1991). Collins’ idea of safety was crucial for marginal voices to become articulate. The next step is imagining spaces of interaction between people with different positions, where sharing perspectives allows critical reflection on taken-for-granted and hierarchical categories (Ghorashi, 2017, 2021). In-between spaces need to be *safe* enough to share stories about one’s experiences from a position of marginality and *daring* enough to allow contrasting positionalities that unravel “the power effects of particular discursive formations”, which Alvesson et al. (2008) refer to as “positioning practices”. In this approach, daring in-between spaces facilitate intersubjective negotiations that challenge taken-for-granted positions and that are often confronting and puzzling, not necessarily feeling safe for participants. Challenging such positions often requires *bravery* and involves becoming vulnerable and exposed (Boostrom, 1998; Arao & Clemens, 2013).

The notion of daring in-between spaces also builds on the idea of interspaces, where people take the time to listen to each other without judgement and try to approach each other from the other's position, thereby allowing them to identify with the other's story (Ghorashi, 2014). An important condition for this is "stepping back" (Janssens & Steyaert, 2001), which means stepping into the margins of discursive power to create space for voices from the position of difference rather than conforming to the dominant norm (through either compliance or resistance). The notion of "daring" thus stresses vulnerability but also the dynamic and unsteady effort of stepping back and moving forward to engage with others, to create and re-create space for difference. Daring spaces might thus eventually allow for people to embrace their "abnormal otherness" or "deviant voice" and thereby unsettle normalized and hierarchical notions of othering (Ghorashi, 2017). The reflective capacity of these spaces allows the emergence of interconnected narratives (based on shared identifications) instead of reactive positioning informed by the dominant frame of othering and exclusion. Thus, tensions are transferred into connections without the need for sameness.

Critically engaged scholarship can contribute to crafting such spaces. We understand critically engaged scholars as scholars who address (subtle) power relations, both within society and during knowledge production, and who include knowledge co-creation with non-academic partners as a pillar of their research. This combination allows possibilities to make invisible power structures visible, to specify new conditions for change in particular social structures and to share responsibility in the process of change (Medina, 2013). In addition, these academics can help create and document daring in-between spaces for sharing stories and experiences that provide innovative possibilities for change within seemingly impossible structures (Ghorashi & Ponzoni, 2014). Those alternative narratives could have short-term impacts and could create opportunities for imagining different futures (Collins, 1991).

Thus, to increase epistemic justice (Medina, 2013), engaged scholarship is needed that critically examines the parameters of knowledge production (including epistemic assumptions, methodological choices and relations between researchers and community) and questions the hierarchies of knowledge maintained by positivist epistemologies. Such issues have been central in participatory research methods developed in countries from the Global South since the 1970s, such as participatory action research (Fals-Borda, 1992; Kemmis et al., 2014) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996), but also in research inspired by critical theory, such as critical race studies, gender studies, queer studies and postcolonial studies. Critically engaged scholars have been active at the intersection of theory and practice, addressing issues of inequality, power and social exclusion (Essed, 2013). These streams were crucial for developing research methodologies centered on social justice and social change, although they had a marginal position in most European academic institutions. Recently, the impact of academic research on societies has gained renewed attention in academic institutions worldwide. This interest is intertwined with growing inequality and polarization throughout the world. More than ever, people are interested in how academic knowledge might help change structural conditions of

inequality and exclusion. However, newly arising research practices which are engaged and committed to social change, are not automatically reflective about power issues permeating knowledge production. Here, we consider “critically engaged research” studies that combine both aspects (Rast, 2021).

3.3 Situating Dutch (Engaged) Scholarship

Despite growing critiques of conventional social science, the normalizing power structures of such scholarship seem quite difficult to change. There seems to be a paradox between the growing importance of and call for engaged scholarship and the increasing limitations and marginalization of this kind of research within academia (Hale, 2008). Bhattacharyya and Murji (2013), for example, discuss how engaged scholars risk being marginalized within institutions. Yet, the interrelationship between conventional and engaged scholarship seems to be quite different depending on the national context.

The situation in the Netherlands is comparable to that in the Scandinavian welfare state societies in which public sociology has mainly been used to support, scrutinize and strengthen welfare state policies combating inequalities (Essed & Nimako, 2006; Greenwood in Hale, 2008; Entzinger & Scholten, 2015). This means identifying vulnerable groups for policy and engaging academic research in the process of policy evaluation. One of the most prominent examples has been the interconnected focus of policy and research on refugees’ and migrants’ position in Dutch society. Over the past decades, scholars of the topic became strong counterparts of the government, resulting in the so-called Dutch minority research machinery (Essed & Nimako, 2006). Dutch social scientific research became strongly dependent on government funding, and policy and academic circuits became homogenized, which had a marginalizing impact on the development of other kinds of engaged scholarship, especially critical scholarship, in the Netherlands (Engbersen, 2009). An even greater challenge for engaged forms of research has been the increase of managerialism and marketization in academia since the early 2000s (Diefenbach, 2007), accompanied by a focus on individualized excellence and increasing output demands (Bal et al., 2014).

Over the past decade, there has been a growing attention in Dutch academia for what is called the valorization of research. A Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) report (2013) raised concerns about the one-way, quantitative evaluation of social science research. Since 2018, the national funding institute NWO has implemented an agenda to fund research projects with governmental and societal actors. However, these initiatives often lack community perspectives in knowledge production, although they sometimes lead to community service learning initiatives (Snijder et al., 2022).

The Dutch debate is mostly limited to what Kajner describes as the “idea of outreach, a one-way transfer whereby scholars extend their expertise and the resources

of institutions of higher education to the community” (Kajner, 2013, p. 10). This does not often involve academic engagement based on the co-generation of knowledge. Involving societal actors with different forms of expertise and positionalities, in order to counter normalizing mechanisms in both society and academia. But with the decline of the welfare state, since 2000, developing a more profound scholarship of engagement in social sciences is even more important. The transition to a society in which welfare benefits are no longer an entitlement and emphasis is increasingly put on citizens’ own initiative and responsibility calls for what Small and Uttl (2005, p. 937) describe as “locally gathered knowledge that can inform community programs, policies and practices”.

However, in the past years, there has been a rise of studies which are based on collaborative and co-creative engaged research with marginalized communities (Leurs et al., 2023), including people with refugee background (Georgiou & Leurs, 2022; Abdulsattar et al., 2023; Huizinga, 2023) and asylum center residents (Kox & Van Liempt, 2022). Also, discussions on racism have become more prominent in Dutch academia, influenced by movements like Kick Out Zwarte Piet and Black Lives Matter (Ghorashi, 2023). Young academics, inspired by intersectional black feminists, are challenging white dominance and calling for reflective research that co-creates knowledge with marginalized communities and addresses social justice issues (Essanhaji, 2023; Schor, 2023; Holle et al., 2024).

Learning infrastructures are needed that make reflective small-scale moments more visible and durable through documentation and vibrant dialogues with local, national and international stakeholders. The following shows efforts to connect different layers of knowledge regarding refugees’ inclusion in the Netherlands departing from the narratives, perspectives and practices of refugee advocates, initiators of civic initiatives, and critically engaged scholars. This effort starts with centering the embodied and collectively shaped knowledge of refugee advocates who are engaged in sharing this knowledge with policymakers. How can we think about refugees’ voices without homogenizing refugees’ perspectives or reducing them to simply individual anecdotes? The next section describes a project that presents a differentiated view of refugee advocacy with a variety of possible contributions.

3.4 A Plea for Polyphonic Politics and Policymaking

Although the value of refugees’ perspectives and knowledge has been gaining attention, this has not translated into concrete ways for experiential knowledge to be meaningful in policymaking. Without refugees’ perspectives, policymakers cannot provide policies that represent refugees’ reality. We therefore initiated a Refugee Academy research project on refugee-led advocacy. Together with one academically trained researcher who is also a leading figure in refugee-led advocacy, we conducted a study based on interviews with active refugee advocates and policymakers in the Netherlands and then discussed the findings in two co-creation meetings with refugee advocates. We also used the findings to develop a masterclass for

policymakers based on (co-written) refugee advocates' narratives, which were used to prompt reflection on the pitfalls and possibilities of including their perspectives in policymaking.

This project shows the importance of distinguishing between different levels of impact and proposes an infrastructure that connects refugee advocates operating at these different levels (see Ponzoni et al., 2020b). The first level is *refugees' individual stories*, particularly stories from those who are most dependent on early integration policies. Their stories can create a connection between refugees' lifeworlds and the mindsets of most policymakers. Although these stories can be quite powerful in unsettling the normalized assumptions of policymakers and helping them work toward more effective policies, their impact is often temporary. For a longer-term impact, a more comprehensive elaboration of what including refugee voices means is needed. This is provided by the second level in our analysis—what we call “embedded stories of refugees”.

Embedded stories differ from individual stories because they carry a combination of practical, reflective and relational consciousness. Refugees at this level have been part of their new society long enough to know the practicalities of the new structure (what Giddens refers to as practical consciousness). However, their experience of their home country is close enough that they still feel like an outsider. Edward Said (1993) called this simultaneous insider/outsider position the condition of in-betweenness. In this condition, the vivid presence of past and present structures and discourses boosts reflection and serves as potential for originality because the normality of structures (or the status quo) are constantly negotiated (Said, 1993). In addition to this practical and reflective consciousness, refugees' stories at this level have relational consciousness because their individual stories are constantly mirrored with stories from fellow refugees in their network. Their story is not necessarily representative of a whole group, but it is also more than an individual story because it is interwoven with the general patterns of shared experiences in their network (a kind of network most policymakers miss). Therefore, refugee advocates at this level can play an important role as contributors and co-shapers of policy. However, this is a potential (in line with Said's perspective) that needs to be embraced by refugees themselves and valued by institutional actors to actually make a difference. Refugee advocates must embrace this potential by actuating the three types of consciousness (practical, reflective and relational) through engagement with learning and strategic trajectories. Recognizing the value of these embedded stories and engaging with them in the long term will enable policymakers, organizations and institutions to craft inclusive policies that respond to refugees' challenges.

The third level, which we refer to as *a protective shell*, involves the perspectives of more experienced refugees who have an institutional memory and a long history of influencing policy. Their knowledge of structural barriers and exclusion mechanisms in the Netherlands are important in helping a younger generation of refugees gain traction and discover new strategies to better navigate the field of

policy-influencing. The added value of intergenerational connections between advocates from younger and older generations is seen clearly in the strong recognition of similar experiences in each generation as well as the strong need to learn from each other's experiences. In this interconnectedness of stories lies the tremendous untapped potential that can bring about mutual inspiration and knowledge exchange.

In our research with refugee advocates, we found that two significant pitfalls limit the impact of refugee perspectives in the current Dutch context. First, the strong focus on individual stories limits recognition of the value of embedded stories and the role of refugee advocates as co-shapers of policy. Thus, refugee stories are mainly used to support an existing message or policy. Furthermore, when an NGO or lobby group is looking for "suitable" refugees to include in their policy-influencing activities, they often tend to strengthen their lobbying objective by emphasizing a particular aspect of a refugee's personal story.

Second, the notion of objectivity limits refugee advocates' involvement in decision-making. Objectivity can be understood in different ways, but many people link it to having sufficient distance from the subject matter. There is a strong assumption that experts (such as scholars, advisers and journalists) without a displacement background are more objective than refugees on issues such as inclusion, integration or reception. This image is dominant not only among policymakers but also within academia, which regrettably quickly reduces the perspective of an expert with a refugee background to a specific and individual view or to a personal story, while the perspective of someone who has "the necessary distance" is considered more objective and therefore more valuable. This assumption underestimates the fact that no story comes out of nowhere and all stories are historically shaped and contextually situated in people's lifeworlds.

It is crucial that institutions aiming to work with refugees at all levels are aware of these underlying mechanisms. The masterclass with policymakers explored how a receptive attitude allows policymakers to learn, to gracefully interact with refugee-led advocates and to look beyond imposed labels of "non-objective" and "incompetent". An appreciation of *polyphony* is therefore essential. Polyphony implies the actual admission of a diversity of voices, especially those voices that are often considered deviant. Otherwise, people with a different perspective may choose to keep it to themselves and conform to the dominant view, leading to the loss of valuable knowledge. This is why we stress the importance of daring in-between spaces where co-creation can take place between advocates and policymakers. In daring spaces, participants with different positions can compare their experiences because there is both respect for different positions and the possibility of identifying one's own blind spots through a different lens. As a first step in this direction, our project's masterclass put refugee advocates' experiences at the center of reflection, inviting policymakers to reflect on their positioning in relation to those experiences.

3.5 Societal Initiatives Can Change the Structure of the Shoreline

Has the recent wave of solidarity merely been a wave, forcefully hitting the beach before vanishing back into the sea, or has it actually changed the structure of the shoreline? (Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019)

Beginning in 2015, in the Netherlands and other European countries, citizen groups and active residents set up countless projects, initiatives and organizations to welcome newcomers in their neighborhoods and towns (Rast & Ghorashi, 2018; Rast et al., 2020). Scholars have described this wave of solidarity as the real distinctive feature of the so-called refugee crisis in Europe. While comparable numbers of refugees had reached Europe before, the civil society's massive response to the "organized irresponsibility" of state actors in this period was unprecedented (Feischmidt et al., 2019; Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019). We started the project Learning Crossroads (Ponzoni et al., 2020a) to reflect on the impact this rise in citizen initiatives has had on the institutional actors responsible for the reception and inclusion of refugees, including national and local governments, large corporations and NGOs.

This participatory research project aimed at creating a reflective infrastructure of connections that could enable initiatives to learn from each other. It supported a shared understanding of the alternative forms of engagement initiatives create, while it also reflected on the pitfalls initiatives encounter in supporting and welcoming refugees. It also encouraged a more general understanding of initiatives' role as a collective field of practice in the larger landscape of refugee inclusion, including the challenges they experience in the interaction with established and formal actors.

Learning Crossroads included a two-day masterclass in which initiatives reflected on their approaches to inclusion in relation to relevant theoretical concepts. The masterclass included both active Dutch citizens who had started initiatives and refugees (including newcomers and those with a longer history in the Netherlands) who had participated in them. Its aim was to foster reflection at the local or individual level and to create learning trajectories by connecting experiences and perspectives. The initiatives had different focuses: for instance, some focused on temporary housing as an alternative to asylum centers, while others focused on building and expanding refugees' social networks. It soon became clear that a comprehensive narrative (a collective story) was needed to show the importance of such initiatives for refugees' inclusion, keeping the quote we started this section with in mind. Together with participants, we distinguished three phases in refugees' trajectories during their first years in a host country: (1) the arrival phase, in which the opportunity to build a new life is connected with the difficulty of dealing with the past and in which quick societal connections and accessible practical information are essential; (2) the settlement phase, in which building meaningful relationships becomes essential and *delayed spaces* (see Ghorashi, 2018) are vital to allow more intimate and warm relationships; and (3) the third phase, in which refugees need opportunities to use

their talents and expertise to acquire relevant work at their skill level, which requires a combination of formal and informal connections. Refugees are heavily dependent on formal authorities in their first years of residence, but they also need places where they can accentuate their dignity as human beings with a versatile story. Distinguishing and describing these phases created a collective image through which the initiatives could position their activities in relation to each other. Thus, their contributions to inclusion were seen as pieces of a puzzle. Articulating these phases also unsettled the narrow concept of “integration” that is dominant in policy discourses and bent it toward a broader notion of inclusion, one that goes beyond minorities’ participation within a certain context to the creation of spaces in which their presence and contributions are valued.

This collective narrative revealed the *potential* of initiatives in relation to each other and to the broader field of institutions. This potential can only be fulfilled by engaging in critical and dialogical reflections on the internal dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within initiatives (see, e.g., Rast & Ghorashi, 2018). Each phase of inclusion brings challenges, which this new field of initiatives struggles with. We described initiatives as experimental spaces that create room to explore tensions such as equality versus paternalism, service providing versus friendships or participating-in versus co-creating projects. Paradoxically, focusing on the tensions, challenges and pitfalls of inclusion within initiatives is what reveals their societal value. Their fluidity—which distinguishes them from formal state services—allows them to make and correct mistakes, to step forward and back again, which helps in unraveling and reflecting on the complexity of inclusive thinking and acting.

This fluidity was central in reflections during the masterclass, where we read academic texts that helped participants reflect on their own challenges with inclusion (a similar methodology is described in Ghorashi & Ponzoni, 2014). For instance, participants shared their efforts and struggles in creating equal relations based on reciprocity and equality, going beyond the duality of helper and aid receiver. They tried to shape their initiatives as spaces in which newcomers have a more active role. However, as one participant shared, “I don’t want to be the ‘helper’, but sometimes the other just wants to be helped”. Fluidity and informality within initiatives allows a shifting between roles to respond to refugees’ concrete needs without fixating on the refugee identity. Refugee participants said they needed support, networks and information but also warm relations. “I have enough connections”, one refugee participant shared, “what I need are friends, intimate relations”.

By showing the importance of fluid spaces for the development of inclusive structures in society (as a complement to formal institutions), this co-created narrative claims a space for a dynamic understanding of inclusion, one that sees inclusion as building dynamic social environments in which implicit norms can be questioned and in which those initially considered outsiders are invited to become contributors and co-creators. The last stage of the project brought this co-created research outcome to a space in which state agents could reflect on the collective narrative and articulate its relevance in relation to their own work.

3.6 Stretching Boundaries Through Engagement

The two projects described above exemplified an effort to work from participatory and co-creative methods which can spur reflection on visible and invisible forms of exclusion. As stated earlier this type of work is gaining more space in the past years in Dutch academia. The last study we present focusses on the experiences, challenges, and aims of Dutch scholars who identify as critically engaged, in relation to the communities they engage with.

Their narratives show their path towards strengthening their own reflective capacity as scholars and that of other societal actors, as a first step in making invisible sources of exclusion visible and imagining conditions for change. As part of the Refugee Academy project Engaged Scholarship and Narratives of Change in Comparative Perspective, we interviewed 14 scholars which we described as critically engaged scholars: that is, considering (subtle) power relations and co-creating knowledge (with non-academic partners) are central to their research. The 14 CERs were affiliated with universities (12) or universities of applied sciences (2) in various positions: 2 PhDs, 1 researcher, 1 senior researcher, 4 post-docs, 5 assistant professors, and 1 full professor. They had diverse backgrounds: 5 Dutch, 6 with migration backgrounds, 2 with refugee backgrounds, and 1 with a partner with a refugee background. Two were male, and the rest were female. They worked in various disciplines, often with interdisciplinary approaches, crucial for public and engaged scholarship. The CERs focused on various research topics involving refugees (such as refugees' inclusion/exclusion, migration experiences, media literacy, sexuality and identity, transcultural care, social entrepreneurship, solidarity initiatives and politics of knowledge production) and took diverse critically engaged approaches (such as action research, focus groups, creative/arts-based research, participatory research, learning networks, expertise labs and master classes).

Their narratives revealed that upholding the promise of critically engaged scholarship requires reflection on and unsettling of (1) (subtle) exclusionary mechanisms that permeate society and (2) (subtle) exclusionary mechanisms that permeate knowledge production, such as exclusive academic structures, power relations between researchers and knowledge co-creators, and researchers' own positionalities, assumptions and blind spots.

Regarding the first requirement, these scholars criticized established systems, structures, discourses (especially in the media) and taken-for-granted assumptions in the Netherlands, such as seeing refugees as helpless victims without agency or as guests who should be ever grateful. They argued that regulations, rules, policies and images are strongly disconnected from the needs, wishes, ambitions and realities of refugees and emphasized that normalized exclusionary images of refugees were one of the main reasons for this distance, which grows through subtle, unconscious and taken-for-granted mechanisms of exclusion. Many scholars referred to specific mechanisms they saw in the context of the recent refugee crisis, in which a large number of actors engaged in acts of humanitarian support and solidarity. These scholars often criticized mechanisms of victimization and paternalism around

solidarity acts and highlighted the implicit violence connected to humanitarianism. They also saw how the short-term actions of people with good intentions could deteriorate refugees' trust. Thus, in the context of active involvement in the support and welcoming of refugees, implicit mechanisms can make good intentions have negative effects.

When asked how engaged scholarship can counter these mechanisms, respondents identified different levels of impact: societal discourses and existing knowledge; policies, organizations and local communities; or refugees themselves. While engaged scholarship projects can contribute to transformations within these different levels, scholars emphasized the need for creating connections between them, for example by facilitating dialogue between different stakeholders or creating understanding between people with different backgrounds and positionalities. They emphasized that societal, academic and political actors make many well-intended, relevant and important efforts. However, funding, support and appreciation for such efforts are often limited, which means they stay isolated and marginal. The lack of connection hampers the creation of alliances and prevents actors from learning from each other. Academia can play a role in connecting these different actors and facilitating co-creation of knowledge to strengthen the reflective capacity of all parties involved (including academia) and to co-generate transformative conditions against normalized exclusionary structures and practices. The interviewed scholars also emphasized the importance of refugees' stories in creating inclusive practices and challenging the gap between refugees' lifeworlds and the structures defining refugees' lives. The scholars thus saw a unique role for academia to connect actors and facilitate dialogue, thereby creating a unique space for reflection and critique that would otherwise not exist.

The second requirement of critically engaged scholarship involves addressing (subtle) exclusion mechanisms that permeate knowledge production itself. The scholars we interviewed worked more intensively, extensively and sustainably with societal partners. They set up their projects as sites of collaboration and co-creation with refugees, communities and other societal actors by adopting alternative research approaches such as action research, focus groups, creative research methods, participatory research, learning networks, expertise labs and masterclasses. They tried to establish their research projects as mutually beneficial/reciprocal, non-exploitative, mutually empowering and reflexive and saw their collaboration as an opportunity for all parties involved, including themselves, to learn and support each other in reciprocal ways. Some scholars helped refugees at the personal level, others created connections between refugees and societal stakeholders and some provided refugees positions as co-researchers. However, scholars' actions were not solely focused on helping individual refugees but on creating mutually beneficial and empowering relationships: several scholars said that by helping individuals, they learned more about how the system worked, which broadened their perspective as researchers. Some described this multi-directional relationship as an integral part of their critically engaged research. The alliances and relations they build in the field transcend the level of exchanging relevant knowledge. Or, more precisely, becoming meaningful to each other (which can take different shapes) sometimes seems to

be a precondition for being able to exchange relevant knowledge because it supports equality and enables trust and empathic connections between researchers and partners/participants. Becoming meaningful to each other helps to create in-between spaces, identify one's blind spots and enable researchers and partners to better understand each other's worldviews and experiences. Or as one scholar called it, collaborating more intensively with a co-researcher with a refugee background was a way for the research team to "connect with [their own] ignorance", referring to epistemic disadvantage connected with privileged positions (Medina, 2013).

3.7 Forced Reflexivity Through Thinking in Travel

The three projects we presented build on reflexivity from three main perspectives—those of refugee advocates, citizen initiatives and engaged scholars. This reflexivity is important not only for these groups individually but also in relation to each other and in interactions with established or institutional actors. By focusing on the roles of these groups, including their efforts toward more inclusive structures, we see that reflexive connections generate an interplay between external and internal reflexivity. The three groups claim a space for their roles and perspectives in the larger institutional field, aiming to force it to reflect on the importance of unsettling implicit exclusionary mechanisms. Through such external reflexivity, actors become aware of the structures limiting refugees' inclusion and limiting their own efforts to contribute to inclusion, and that awareness leads to better negotiating positions and in-depth collaborations. But this claim also forces a form of internal reflection on the meaning of their own choices, actions and internal challenges, through which they can make their practices more inclusive (internal reflexivity).

Our refugee advocates case showed the importance of including refugees in decision-making processes that impact their life trajectories. A large gap exists between the structures of decision-making and refugees' lifeworlds. This disconnect not only negatively impacts refugees' lives and chances for a meaningful future but also causes failures at various levels of policymaking despite policymakers' good intentions. Refugee advocates' understanding of the specificity and importance of their embedded stories in relation to inclusiveness will enable them to better negotiate their position and claim a space in policymaking arenas (external reflexivity). Academic research in co-creation with refugee advocates provides a clearer picture of refugee advocacy's potential, one that distinguishes different levels, roles and (intergenerational) connections and thus enables internal reflexivity within refugee advocacy groups. Through the interconnectedness of their stories and perspectives, refugees can have a crucial role in unsettling normalized images that hinder their full participation and inclusion in the societies in which they live. Refugee advocates can potentially connect refugees' lifeworld experiences with the various institutional bodies included in policymaking and contribute to the necessary polyphony of perspectives to co-create inclusive policies and practices. However, an infrastructure is needed to strengthen advocates' strategies for

maneuvering in the various formal and informal structures they intend to influence. This infrastructure requires the presence of *daring in-between spaces*, which allow for institutions' receptiveness toward the specific value of refugee's stories and perspectives and for the possibility to question normalized practices that are disconnected from refugees' worlds.

Our societal initiatives case similarly shows the importance of a duality of internal and external reflexivity. Citizen initiatives need to reflect on their own internal struggles with inclusion and equality while also recognizing the worth of their distinctive stories in connection with each other and their potential regarding inclusiveness. As we found, engaged scholarship can help stipulate the specific role and collective story of initiatives, including their potential to create fluid safe/daring spaces for refugees that enable durable connections beyond the professional contacts institutions provide. With this knowledge, initiatives can contextualize their role in relation to other stakeholders, negotiate their position and create collaborations with other governmental and civil society actors.

Finally, engaged scholars need to be aware of the importance of their role in promoting inclusiveness both in society and academia, which will enable them to negotiate their position in academics and create collaborations with other (societal and academic) stakeholders. We elucidated how academic research that ignores refugees' experiences and narratives can become complicit in policy failures because it does not challenge the dominant discourses that fixate on refugees' shortcomings instead of their talents and qualities. In this way, the Dutch research-policy nexus (Essed & Nimako, 2006; Entzinger & Scholten, 2015) has led to a mutual confirmation of images, dominant in both policy and research, of refugees as people in need of help instead of people whose perspectives and voices are essential to create inclusive policies. Engaged scholars must therefore appreciate and propagate the crucial contribution of co-creative engaged research practices that can unsettle those images. This external reflexivity must be mirrored by internal reflexivity about increasing inclusivity in engaged scholarship practices, such as by establishing conditions for reciprocal learning and mutually beneficial relationships within co-creative studies with refugee participants.

Internal and external reflexivity are a simultaneous presence. Having a clear picture of one's role and contribution regarding inclusiveness is necessary to create reflective connections with the various stakeholders one engages with. Hence, the synergy of these three perspectives provides the chance to unsettle the normalizing power of exclusion through strong reflexivity, which as we explained, emerges through contrasting positionalities and contrasting forms of situated knowledge (Harding, 1993).

Refugee advocates' role is particularly crucial for unsettling the normalized images that hinder their full participation and inclusion in the societies in which they live. Yet, in practice, their perspectives are not taken seriously in academic, societal and institutional structures. This reflects the dominant perception that experiential knowledge is less valuable than professional and academic knowledge. The embodied knowledge of refugee-ness and embedded knowledge of refugee advocates is disregarded as not objective enough. As our emphasis on the need for strong

objectivity through strong reflexivity (Harding, 1993) shows, we oppose both assumptions. Engaged scholars have an important task in amplifying the impact of refugees' perspectives. These often marginalized perspectives can offer a particularly advantageous angle for looking at exclusionary structures. Engaged scholars also have the means to give these perspectives a stage by facilitating co-creative spaces in which societal stakeholders, including societal initiatives and policymakers, come together to co-generate more inclusive policies and practices. Engaged scholarship is thus a way to enable the necessary reflexivity both within and outside the academy and to reduce scholars' complicity with the implicit exclusionary structures they are all part of. This requires academics to engage with societal actors and communities in order to broaden their scope and their contribution in co-creating conditions for change.

Thus, while conventional academic research, policymakers and societal initiatives fail to grasp the subtle yet sustainable forms of exclusion that exist alongside inclusive efforts, engaged scholarship promises the co-production of knowledge with the capacity to unsettle normalizing mechanisms in both society and academia. But this will only be possible if all actors involved in the research (engaged scholars, refugees and any other societal stakeholders) are reflective about their own blind spots while trying to understand each other's worldviews and experiences.

Because power works through disciplining actors' actions, thoughts and speech, it is necessary to deliberately create situations that challenge individuals and even make them somewhat uncomfortable. Choosing the easy road leads to reproducing the taken-for-granted. Thus, bravery is required (Boostrom, 1998; Arao & Clemens, 2013) to establish daring in-between spaces in which normalized constructions can be challenged. Both Bauman (2000) and Said (1993) set the metaphor of exile as a condition for resisting normalization. Said referred to this exilic condition of living in-between worlds, cultures and structures as a potential way to remain creative and original. He argued that, while the condition of in-betweenness for exiles could lead to feelings of disconnectedness, it also has great potential to lead to originality and creativity because exiles constantly negotiate their past and present discourses (Said, 1993). Exiles do not have the privilege of taking their present context for granted. The simultaneous existence of often conflicting past and present contexts creates a condition of *forced reflexivity* (see also Ghorashi, 2017). This condition could, however, be considered an advantage over people without migration experience because, if one can live only in the present, one risks disappearing in that present (Bauman, 2000, p. 206). Thus, an important condition for originality is to "think in travel", by having homes at the crossroads of many cultures (Derrida in Bauman, 2000) and by occupying a space on the threshold of many discourses. Translated to co-creative engaged platforms, stakeholders' presence and bravery (by being vulnerable and making space for potentially unsettling perspectives) forces them to engage in strong reflexivity.

Facilitating this thinking in travel through forced reflexivity in a more structured manner requires platforms that connect various societal actors to enable co-creation of knowledge and co-generation of transformative conditions toward refugee inclusion. It is therefore troublesome that critically engaged scholarship is marginalized

within the Dutch refugee/migration research context (Essed & Nimako, 2006; Engbersen, 2009). Despite the increasing awareness of the need for engaged scholarship, the actual contributions of such research are scattered and short-term oriented, and they often do not go beyond the local context. The production of supra-local knowledge—and certainly transnational knowledge—in addition to theoretical innovations is often overshadowed by the focus on local change in this kind of research (Ponzoni, 2016; Svensson et al., 2007). There is a lack of durable, systematic, trans-local and cross-national knowledge about the possibilities, challenges and impacts/contributions of such research for societies and for academia. With this chapter we hope to contribute to more comprehensive (theoretically informed, practice-oriented) understanding of the contributions and challenges of engaged scholarship at the interface of academia and society.

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Chapter 4

Practicing Double Reflexivity. Producing Knowledge on the Production of Knowledge on Migration



Inken Bartels, Philipp Schäfer, and Laura Stielike

4.1 Introduction

The production of knowledge on migration is a growing field of both institutional practice and academic research. On the one hand, there is a “*migration knowledge hype*” (Braun et al., 2018) among states and international organizations. On the other hand, migration research itself is increasingly focusing on the production of knowledge for migration governance (Boswell, 2009; Boswell et al., 2011; Bartels, 2018; Casas-Cortes & Cobarrubias, 2018) and on the reflexive analysis of its own processes of knowledge production (Nieswand & Drotbohm, 2014; Dahinden, 2016; Amelina, 2021). Reflexivity is on its way to become the new buzzword in Migration Studies (cf. Dahinden and Pott, Chap. 1, this volume). It appears that many migration researchers who use(d) to call their work ‘critical’, ‘feminist’, ‘postcolonial’ or ‘post-positivist’ now gather under this new umbrella term. Sometimes it even seems that the label ‘reflexive’ is used strategically in order to position oneself and one’s research in a more cooperative and less politicized way: A way that might open up new publication, cooperation or job opportunities. However, the question of what reflexivity means in the context of migration research is still relatively open and up for debate.

In this contribution, we explore what ‘doing reflexive migration research’ can mean to us as researchers with roots in critical, feminist, postcolonial and post-positivist migration research. In previous research projects, we have “studied up” (Nader, 1969) different powerful processes of producing and governing migration—be it in discourses around migration and development (Stielike, 2017), in organizations of international migration management (Bartels, 2022) or in urban

I. Bartels · P. Schäfer · L. Stielike (✉)
Universität Osnabrück, Osnabrück, Germany
e-mail: inken.bartels@uni-osnabrueck.de; philipp.schaefer@uni-osnabrueck.de;
laura.stielike@uni-osnabrueck.de

migration regimes in the German long summer of migration (Schäfer, 2022). How we can build trustful relationships with the actors involved in such powerful processes has been a key ethical and methodological question throughout and also constitutes the starting point for our collective thinking on how to study the ways in which other researchers produce knowledge on migration. As members of the research group *The Production of Knowledge on Migration* at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) at the University of Osnabrueck we pursue post-doctoral research projects related to knowledge production in the context of migration. Inken Bartels researches statistical knowledge production on migration in West Africa, Laura Stielike analyses the big-data-based knowledge production on migration in research institutions and international organizations and Philipp Schäfer studies the production of knowledge on migration in and through police academies and universities. While we observe a dominant discourse of neutrality at play in these research fields, we assume that the knowledge producers we study are far from being disinterested vis-à-vis the social worlds they measure, analyse and make knowledgeable to others. They are embedded in socio-political contexts and powerful institutional structures in which migration is problematized, and turned into an object of research and governance. Thus, the knowledge they produce serves a specific—often political—purpose. At the same time, our knowledge practices are not neutral either. We produce knowledge from specific positionalities as researchers entangled in specific moral economies, institutional structures and political struggles.

Mobilizing insights from Feminist Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Critical Migration and Border Regime Research, we argue that a reflexive approach to the study of how other researchers produce knowledge on migration means subjecting both these other migration researchers' as well as one's own practices of knowledge production to (self-)critical analysis. A process that for us entails questions of care and harm. With this in mind, we propose an approach that we call *double reflexivity*. This means both to reflect upon the epistemological, methodological, and political implications of other migration researchers' knowledge production *and* to scrutinize one's own knowledge practices. To put *double reflexivity* into a research practice, we suggest drawing on (self-)reflexive techniques developed in Feminist STS (e.g. Harding, 1987, 1991; Haraway, 1988).¹ In this tradition, María Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) develops three forms of "thinking with care". Following this reading, *thinking-with* means to resist individualized thinking and instead to engage in meaningful conversations with migration researchers outside of one's own thematic or methodological field. *Dissenting-within* proposes to see these researchers as co-producers of migration knowledge and to search for careful ways to criticize their work without doing harm to the individuals involved. Finally, *thinking-from-and-for* encourages us to take marginalized epistemologies as a starting point for our investigations.

¹On feminist standpoint epistemology see also Dieterich and Nieswand (Chap. 5) in this volume. See also Ponzoni et al. (Chap. 3) in this volume on their use of Sandra Harding's (1991) concept of 'strong objectivity' as a tool for engaged migration scholarship.

We claim that, on the one hand, *thinking with care* about migration knowledge production allows heterogeneous groups of migration scholars to create shared moments of reflection and critique, to become attentive to the ambivalent positions and potentially conflictual research relations in the field, to think migration beyond established categories and to question taken-for-granted epistemologies. On the other hand, Critical Migration and Border Regime Research reminds us that producing knowledge on the production of knowledge on migration involves risks and sometimes even harm. First, analyzing knowledge practices of other migration researchers can endanger reputations and careers of both those being researched and those doing the research (Hatton, 2018). It can harm relations between colleagues, between supervisors and those supervised and between researchers and those being researched. Second, producing knowledge on knowledge practices in migration research might also mean to “do harm” (Stierl, 2020) to those knowledge practices that sustain and reinforce inhumane migration and border policies.

In what follows, we first discuss the role of care and harm in the knowledge production on migration. Subsequently, we show what it can mean to *think with care* and *do (no) harm* as migration researchers who empirically investigate the knowledge practices of other migration researchers. In our conclusion, we reflect on how such research strategies can contribute to a (more) reflexive approach to study knowledge production on migration.

4.2 Thinking with Care and Doing (No) Harm in Migration Studies

Our contribution aims to introduce (thinking with) care as a productive practice for reflexive migration research. We ask what it means to think with care not only about migrants but also about researchers who define, categorize, count, interview and interpret migrants’ experiences, perspectives and realities. Of course, those researchers could be migrants themselves.² We seek to explore how we can build and maintain careful relations with those who produce knowledge on migration—and who are often our colleagues—while remaining critical with regard to their knowledge practices.

Drawing on Feminist STS, we argue that academic knowledge production requires care (Martin et al., 2015, p. 631). Or, in the words of Puig de la Bellacasa (2012, p. 198): “relations of thinking and knowing require care”. Drawing on Donna Haraway, she argues that “creating knowledge is a relational practice with important consequences in the shaping of possible worlds” and calls to “pay attention to the workings and consequences of our ‘semiotic technologies’” (ibid., p. 199). In a similar vein, Aryn Martin et al. (2015, p. 626) argue that “in our engagements with

²For a discussion of the (almost endless) transition between the position of the researched migrant and that of the migration researcher see Jashari (Chap. 2) in this volume.

the worlds that we study, construct, and inhabit, we cannot but care: care is an essential part of being a researcher and a citizen”.

This is especially true for qualitative, ethnographic approaches that acknowledge the agency and integrity of research participants as well as the power relations that mark many research endeavors. Many cultural and social science scholars have highlighted the importance of research ethics. They demand us to be responsible for the knowledge we produce, the realities we enact and the perspectives we neglect during our research. They also urge us to care about and to not harm the subjects we collaborate with in our research projects: those we interview, observe or cite; and to acknowledge the power relations and dependencies between different actors involved in a research project. Finally, they also direct attention to neo-liberal conditions, the importance of emotions, and the transformative potential of care in academia (Askins & Blazek, 2017; Corbera et al., 2020).

In migration scholarship, a strong sensibility for research ethics can be mostly observed in studies that focus on migrant experiences, practices and perspectives (see, for example, Krause, 2017). Research handbooks, ethics committees and method chapters are full of cautious advice and self-reflection when research is done *about* or *with* migrants. Critical migration scholars highlight the social, economic and political gap between researchers and researched and sensitize for the power relations at play and their effects on the knowledge produced. They call for the researchers’ responsibility towards the people they study (Clark-Kazak, 2021; Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2020).

What has received far less attention, is the question how we must rethink care and harm in research ethics when we do not research migrants but other actors who produce knowledge on migrants or migration. What is our research relationship with these knowledge producers? Are we studying up, sideways or down (Stryker & González, 2014)? On the one hand, we perceive our work as a form of ‘studying up’ as, in many cases, these knowledge producers occupy powerful positions. They are equipped with high levels of economic, social and cultural capital and work for well-established institutions that help them disseminate the knowledge they produce. Their recognition as ‘migration experts’ makes possible for them to spread political assessments and recommendations beyond the academic field. On the other hand, we feel the need to question such strong power asymmetries between ‘us’ and ‘them’: Aren’t we researching the knowledge practices of our ‘colleagues’? Aren’t we also considered ‘migration experts’ and aren’t we equally equipped with resources and prestige due to our university jobs and academic qualifications? In many ways, studying the knowledge practices of other knowledge producers means ‘studying sideways’. However, also among ‘colleagues’ power asymmetries are notable regarding, for example, the position we have in academia, the methods we apply, the data we work with, and the prestige of the institution we work for. Additionally, societal power relations such as race, class, and gender are also at play between ‘colleagues’ (see also Hernández-Albújar and Konyali, Chap. 16, in this volume). Finally, we have to ask ourselves whether we are also ‘studying down’ when we make other migration researchers the object of our studies. How do we position ourselves in relation to the people whose knowledge practices we analyze,

order, and objectify? Don't we, implicitly, look down on them and their ways of producing knowledge? Does scrutinizing their knowledge practices put us in a superior position vis-à-vis the people whose practices we study? At least, we see a risk of creating new hierarchies and power dimensions.

When we seek to think with care and do no harm in our own knowledge production, we need to reflect, acknowledge and negotiate these complex and multi-facet power relations. This implies the careful handling of research relations that makes sure that no one is harmed including ourselves—neither during the research process nor by the knowledge that is produced and circulated. But caring for individual research participants does not mean to become complicit in the knowledge they produce or the knowledge practices they employ. On the contrary, caring also implies to question and destabilize knowledge practices that are harmful to migrants. Thus, *thinking with care* means acting responsibly in research relations while remaining critical with the knowledge producers we study. In order to think with care about and do no harm to knowledge producers on migration, we propose an approach that we call *double reflexivity*. This means making knowledge practices the object of migration research in the first place, creating relations with knowledge producers, familiarizing with the social worlds, logics and modalities of how researchers do what they do, taking them serious as researchers who do care (but may also do harm), and scrutinize the epistemological, methodological, and political implications of their knowledge practices. At the same time, *double reflexivity* means to question our own knowledge practices while studying the knowledge practices of others.

4.3 Practicing Double Reflexivity

This section outlines what *double reflexivity* can mean for us as researchers studying knowledge production on migration. In the following, we explore ways to think with care and do (no) harm while studying the production of big-data-based, statistical and police knowledge on migration.

4.3.1 *Thinking-With*

Practicing *double reflexivity* changes the way we interact with the empirical fields we study. According to Puig de la Bellacasa (2012, p. 205), “thinking-with belongs to, and creates, community by inscribing thought and knowledge in worlds one cares about in order to *make a difference*.” Writing this, Puig de la Bellacasa has a diverse feminist community or a heterogeneous community of feminist science studies scholars in mind. Even if there are diverse standpoints, interests and positions of power at play in these contexts, we might assume common goals and perhaps even strong motivations for alliances and solidarity. However, how is this idea

of *thinking-with* applicable to Migration Studies? Of course, there are communities of thought and of common interest within this field. Scholars co-author articles, cite and recommend each other's work, collaborate in research projects or organize conference panels together. But at first sight, there are also strong oppositions and rivalries, e.g., between qualitative and quantitative research, between 'critical' and 'mainstream' research, or between basic and policy-oriented research. Importantly, the various politics of knowledge production in migration research not only differ in methodological and theoretical preferences but also in normative stances on the question which individual and collective actors and what political aims and social values should profit from the knowledge produced (Stielike, 2022a).³

We argue that there are at least two ways of *thinking-with* migration researchers who embrace a politics of knowledge production that differs from our own. First, we can analyze the ways other migration researchers think in order to reflect upon our own unquestioned categories and implicit assumptions. Second, we can make use of the methodological or theoretical innovations or strengths of this other field of migration research to produce knowledge on migration ourselves.

In the following, we will show what this could mean when we study the production of knowledge in big-data-based migration research. This field has developed recently, not only driven by technological possibilities, data availability and research dynamics in data science and computational social science but also strongly pushed forward by governments, international organizations and technology companies (Taylor & Meissner, 2020; Stielike, 2022b). Big-data-based migration research analyses social media data, mobile phone positioning data, internet search engine data and satellite data in order to gain knowledge on human mobility (Sîrbu et al., 2020; Stielike, 2022c). The promise of big data for migration governance is the access to migration-related data that is virtually real-time—or can be updated frequently—that covers geographic areas with no or limited official migration statistics, and that has much larger sample sizes and more flexible definitions of migration than traditional surveys (Rango & Vespe, 2018, p. 6).

Big-data-based migration research comes with many legal, ethical, methodological, theoretical and political pitfalls. Data protection in big-data-based studies is often not regulated by state law but entirely subject to self-regulation by corporations and researchers, especially in the Global South where most pioneering studies take place (Taylor, 2016, p. 332). From a research ethics perspective, it is highly problematic to (mis)use big-data-based knowledge that was intended to improve humanitarian aid or integration policies for the surveillance and control of mobility and migrants, a process called *function creep* (Taylor, 2016, p. 330; Salah et al., 2019, p. 490). Lack of representativeness and bias is another pitfall. The utilization rate of social media and mobile phones differs strongly between regions, genders, age, and social groups, leading, for example, to an underrepresentation of women in the data sets (Salah et al., 2019, p. 489). Also, bot-assisted social media accounts are

³On reflexivity and 'epistemic others' in migration research see also Dieterich and Nieswand (Chap. 5) as well as Jashari (Chap. 2) in this volume.

strategically utilized to influence online discussions on migration with distorting effects on research results (*ibid.*, p. 489). Algorithms are another source of bias, for example, when face recognition programs recognize white women better than black women because they were trained with non-diverse data (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018). Furthermore, the god's-eye-perspective, male dominance, and the strong dependency on the provision of data by private companies are likely to influence the formulation of research questions (Boyd & Crawford, 2012, p. 674; Dalton et al., 2016, p. 7). The often uncritical use of contested migration-related concepts such as 'assimilation' in big-data-based migration research might also undermine efforts for a more 'reflexive' migration research (Stielike, 2022c). Finally, the strong entanglements between big-data-based migration research and newly established data centers of international organizations bear the risk that finding answers to migration-related questions is primarily framed as a question of better data; thereby ignoring that the often conflicting relationship between migratory practices and the attempts to govern them is actually a highly political question (Stielike, 2022b).

Coming back to Puig de la Bellacasa's quote on *thinking-with*: Against the backdrop of big-data-based migration research, what are the worlds we care about and what difference do we want to make? A first way to *think-with* big-data-based migration research is to carve out those knowledge practices and forms of knowledge employed and produced by this nascent sub-discipline that help us to question our own categories and research assumptions. For example, the multiple big-data-driven definitions of migration and migrants used in big-data-based research papers on migration enact realities beyond a governmental discourse on migration, namely, a gradual shift from state/nation/origin-centered migration thinking to mobility-centered migration thinking. For example, a study based on e-mail users' IP addresses defines migration as a change of usual residence which has occurred when in a first time period a user has sent most e-mails from country A and in a second time period from country B (Zagheni & Weber, 2012). In contrast to definitions by international organizations or national statistical offices the act of movement itself, place of birth, nationality, motives or determinants of migration do not play a role. Consequently, these alternative enactments of migration invite us to reflect upon the strong associations between migration, nationality, and origin in 'conventional'—and possibly in our own—migration research and help to rethink migration beyond these categories (Stielike, 2022c).

However, at the same time, big-data-driven enactments reproduce methodological nationalism, as the nation-state—here usually called 'country'—is still (implicitly) used as the key reference point to define migration and migrants. Also, some big-data-driven migrant definitions hold the risk that migration-related categories defined by private technology and social media companies almost unnoticeably influence researchers' understandings of migration. For example, as Facebook does not provide the category 'migrants', researchers use Facebook's category 'expats' instead, even though Facebook does not disclose how users are categorized as 'expats' (Zagheni et al., 2017, p. 724). Finally, their aim to contribute to one of the well-established research fields of demography, integration or humanitarianism and to produce policy-relevant knowledge leads authors of big-data-based studies to

inscribe into migration narratives that stand in stark contrast to these alternative enactments of migration which are so promising for a reflexive perspective (Stielike, 2022c).

Thinking-with the growing community of big-data-based migration research should therefore be a twofold process: On the one hand, we should draw on qualitative methods to carefully carve out the alternative enactments of migration in big-data-based migration research and use these insights to reflect upon our own migration thinking. This requires us to really care for the methods, assumptions and data used by the community we study in order to gain a basic understanding of the ways big-data-based knowledge on migration is produced. At the same time, this requires an openness of the big-data-based migration research community to discuss their work with us. At best, we find colleagues from this community willing to develop an interdisciplinary joint research project on the reflexive potential of big-data-based migration research. On the other hand, we need to openly criticize those knowledge practices employed by big-data-based migration research that (re)produce problematic migration-related categories, infringe on data privacy, violate research ethics principles and/or serve policies that are harmful to migrants.

A second way of *thinking-with* is to engage in big-data-based counter-knowledge production which tries to do harm to knowledge and knowledge practices that are harmful to migrants or racially discriminated groups. One example of this is the project *Forensic Oceanography* which employs forensic methods to find evidence of practices of non-assistance and human rights violations against migrants by state and non-state actors in the Mediterranean Sea. Drawing on various data sources, but especially on satellite images which are usually used to control migration, the initiators of the project, Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani, call this reading “against the grain” of (big) data a “disobedient gaze” (Hinger, 2018, p. 196; Pezzani & Heller, 2013). In dialogue with NGOs, they combined satellite data and testimonies of survivors to reconstruct the death of 63 migrants whose boats were drifting in NATO’s maritime surveillance area for 2 weeks without any assistance at all. This evidence was then used in several law suits (Heller et al., 2012). *Forensic Oceanography* is an example of big-data-based counter-knowledge production on migration—to use data that is intended to control mobility as a means to hold actors accountable for the negative and often deadly consequences of migration control practices.

In a nutshell, *thinking-with* can, but does not necessarily happen in close collaboration with other migration researchers. Instead, we can either use their thoughts as a mirror for our own migration thinking which allows for more self-reflexivity or to cherry-pick data, methods or theories from other fields and harness them for our own knowledge production. In our view, *thinking-with* requires the careful analysis of knowledge practices and produced knowledge, it should not do harm to individual research subjects, but it can aim at criticizing and even destabilizing knowledge and knowledge practices that are harmful to migrants.

4.3.2 *Dissenting-Within*

As demonstrated above, practicing *double reflexivity* does not only allow us to create common grounds and possibilities of collaboration with other researchers, but it also seeks to open up space for criticism and dialogue. Puig de la Bellacasa uses the notion of *dissenting-within* to highlight that collective knowledge making “is not incompatible with conflict” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 204), but that it is possible to create “caring relations while recognizing divergent positions” (ibid., p. 207). Accordingly, *dissenting-within* entails an “openness to the effects we might produce with critiques to worlds we would rather not endorse” (ibid., p. 206). While acknowledging such dissent between different positions, she suggests to focus on relations, connections and interdependences, rather than on contrasts, contradictions and divergences.

In this section, we explore the methodological and ethical implications of *dissenting-within* by looking at the specific case of migration statistics, drawing upon research on statistical knowledge production on migration in West Africa. Following a constructivist understanding, we see statistical data practices as being performative for migration realities (Ruppert & Scheel, 2021). In this respect, epistemic, methodological and practical struggles among different actors involved in the production of migration statistics enact international migration as a countable, knowable and actionable phenomenon. Studying the heterogeneous field of national statistical offices, academic institutions, policy think tanks and international organizations and their knowledge practices in West Africa calls for an ethnographic investigation of the relations between these actors, their interactions with materials and technologies, legal norms and knowledge regimes. Based on our own research experience, we reflect upon the practical challenge of becoming part of the field and building responsible, trustworthy research relations with the people working for these institutions while dissenting with their knowledge practices and even openly criticizing them. In this way, we seek to draw attention to strategies and pitfalls of being researchers who are both *dissenting* and *within* a contested field of knowledge production.

Researching knowledge production on migration usually means to engage with people working for powerful institutions—but who are often scientists themselves. Recognizing that we are *within* the world that we study makes us accountable in a challenging way. While we have a clear objective of producing critical knowledge about dominant ways of defining, counting and categorizing mobility through censuses, surveys or administrative data and their political implications, we have to take into account contradicting expectations and carefully handle relationships with these ‘colleagues’. Our research might neither turn out to be useful for them nor fit their self-understanding and -presentation. Nevertheless, it depends on their cooperation and the insights into their everyday work of producing numbers, graphs and calculations that they are willing to share. They have to introduce us to the standards, routines and materials of producing censuses, administrative registers and social surveys. We are thus confronted with the challenge of how to gain their

participation in an ethical way that does not harm the individuals willing to share insights into their work and organization.

We start our reflection on this challenge by looking at the ways we gain access to the field. From our experience, participation in epistemic places such as international data fora and conferences, training workshops and seminars or official presentations of research cooperation, findings and policy advice opens the doors to the local as well as to the international scientific communities and political institutions (Bartels, 2018). These “temporary sites” (Hannerz, 2003, p. 210) are often located in the capitals’ exclusive hotels, conference halls or business centers. While these locations restrict access for the wider public, they are accessible for us as European researchers and allow us to directly observe the interaction of national and international statisticians, data scientists, enumerators, policy makers, IO project manager and donor representatives. While access for participant observation remains difficult to negotiate in this restricted field, interviews are often a more feasible mode of investigation in this ‘expert world’. From our experience, many actors in this field know what it entails to conduct an academic research project (Bartels, 2022). Moreover, they often understand themselves as experts who consider it part of their professional business to share their expertise on the sources, methods, visions and challenges of their work.

Reflecting on personal encounters with these statistical knowledge producers leads us to engage with our position and the power relations that structure our movements in this field. The position as a researcher in a transnational field in which knowledge production and dissemination belong to the core practices differs from typical ethnographic encounters with marginalized communities studied by a privileged outsider. Rather than using ethnographic methods to *study down*, this research interacts with the “practices of global agents” and their “hegemonic articulations of power” (Mato, 2000). The “multiple, conflicting, and more ambiguous” involvements (Marcus, 1999, p. 17) resulting from this research strategy require to rethink conventional expectations about power relations between the researcher and the researched, about questions of inside and outside and about the very boundaries of a field.

We experience ethnographic knowledge production on migration statistics in West Africa as a complex multi-vocal dialogue with ‘our own working culture’ in a ‘foreign context’ marked by unknown languages, unfamiliar environments and strange but familiar people. While we are *outsiders* to the countries’ and the organizations’ ‘cultures’, we are able to act as *insiders* in many field sites—research institutes, knowledge transfer events and academic conferences, including their coffee breaks and dinner invitations—sharing not only the social, cultural and educational background of many actors but also the privileged position and experience of European citizens in West Africa. We are regarded as being ‘in the right place’ when entering otherwise gated sites of the international community, expat worlds and academic settings, in which we can speak the ‘local languages’—in this case being the countries’ colonial languages English and French—and do not attract much attention as European researchers. As Scheel et al. (2019, p. 537) argue, it would be too simplified to distinguish such “diverse and shifting entanglements in a web of

intersecting power relations” into a neat insider/outsider dichotomy. Highlighting both the “continuity and simultaneity of interwoven processes of inclusion and exclusion”, they suggest to think of our positionalities in terms of differential inclusion in sites with multiple complex power relations at play (*ibid.*).

An understanding of these sites as “sites of struggles” (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2013, p. 246) moreover highlights how our research is itself intertwined with the politics of production of (scientific) knowledge on migration and its possibilities of control (Mato, 2000; De Genova, 2013). Conducted in a field with boundaries between science and politics often blurred, it is “inevitably caught up in the system that it sets out to analyze” (Andersson, 2014, p. 15). This engaged position means not only to negotiate access and relations but also to become personally involved. It might mean to make friends and build informal relationships; or to share one’s own research agenda, biography or life situation. As a consequence, there are complex social relations to handle while maneuvering through the different positions and expectations in a field in which the boundaries of academic knowledge production and politics are fluid and not always visible. This leads to ethical and political questions of negotiating loyalty and distance in a situation in which the ‘familiar’ and the ‘strange’, the ‘we’ and the ‘them’ is complex and the researcher constantly negotiates and shifts between in- and outside or even moves the boundaries of doing research and being researched.

Acknowledging such complex relations and ambivalent positions, we ask how it is possible to critically research statistical knowledge production *from within* while carefully dealing with these relationships. First, we feel it is important to acknowledge that it is impossible (and not necessary) to please all those people who participate in this research with its results. For example, research about statistical data practices may reveal the tacit assumptions, implicit rules, empirical messiness or political consequences—whether intentional or otherwise—implicated in their production. Yet, it is still important to consider reciprocity and possibilities of compensation also when *studying up*. As demonstrated above, research on other knowledge producers challenges expectations about power constellations of who conducts research on whom. This opens up space to reflect more generally about the agency of those who are researched and the significance of research for the researched (von Vacano, 2019, p. 84). It also helps us to accept that those researched have their own agenda and motives to participate in the study, such as promoting and reflecting on their research or building new networks. Assuming that other knowledge producers are familiar with the basic rules of conducting a research project and sticking to these rules allows us to create more equal and, at best, mutual beneficial research relationships that can serve multiple, diverging objectives. Second, this constellation helps to understand conflicts as a normal feature of research relationships. According to Mechthild von Vacano, “disagreement or discomfort indicate that the research relationship is being negotiated on open terms” (*ibid.*, p. 85). Negotiating access and relationships in more equal terms also entails giving research participants space to express opposition, unease or disappointment—be it for political reasons, organizational loyalty or their own career ambitions. It means to accept criticism, avoidance or refusal as a potential reaction in any research relationship.

In sum, we experience critical research on statistical knowledge production as a relational and potentially conflictual endeavor that requires care. It involves “affective dimensions of engagement” vis-à-vis diverse positions and divergent world-views (Thajib et al., 2019, p. 16). It necessitates “the sharing of intimate information, built upon trust and rapport as foundational values of mutual respect” while not being “limited to positive feelings of intimacy and caring” (Funk & Thajib, 2019, p. 137). Dissenting views, conflictual dynamics of power and feelings of disappointment and frustration inherently belong to encounters in the field. Acknowledging this allows us to reflect upon what is at stake for whom in producing (self-reflexive) knowledge on the knowledge production on migration. At best, this creates space for more open and equal research relationships. The example of *dissenting-within* thus underscores that to *think with care* about other migration knowledge producers is compatible with conflicts and criticism.

4.3.3 *Thinking-From-and-For*

Finally, *thinking with care and doing (no) harm* while practicing *double reflexivity* makes migration researchers reflect on the situatedness of their own knowledge production. It also helps them to go beyond epistemological dualisms—for example, between qualitative/quantitative, critical/mainstream and reflexive/applied research. Building upon the work of Sandra Harding (1991), Puig de la Bellacasa develops a standpoint-theoretical reading of *thinking with care* as *thinking-from-and-for*. By shifting the focus of attention to alternative epistemologies of knowledge “conceived through struggles in any context of subjugation” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 208)—be it through the oppositional struggles of Black feminist women or through the suffering of Oncomouse™, a transgenic mouse produced in the laboratory to help research and fight breast cancer (Haraway, 1997)—standpoint theoretical thinking commits researchers to familiarize with, care for and do no harm to the lives of those being marginalized.

Thinking-from-and-for involves thinking about the production of knowledge on migration from the objects of study, the migrants themselves. As methodologically valuable as well as necessary in terms of knowledge politics, this shift in perspective certainly comes with some pitfalls. While standpoint-theoretical knowledge politics encourage researchers to use their space as a “site of transformation” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 208) and social change, they run the risk of thinking not only *from* the margins but *for* the marginalized themselves. They might do so by acting as their legitimate spokespersons or by fetishizing marginal experiences as inspirational or uplifting (ibid.). On top of that, we argue that positioning one’s research in this way risks reinforcing a problematic ‘us versus them’ attitude that merely locates the other elsewhere in Migration Studies—the non-reflexive, uncritical and non-feminist other migration researchers.

In the following, we discuss what *thinking-from-and-for* can mean for a research project that is interested in the production of knowledge on migration in and through

police training and research institutions. The field of police research on migration is as new as it is rapidly growing. Against the backdrop of global migration dynamics, police have become increasingly interested in knowledge on cross-border mobilities and their local social impacts. This holds true in particular for the German context, where the arrival of a large number of asylum-seeking persons during and after the “long summer of migration” (Hess et al., 2016) has prompted a series of police-led research projects on migration. Since 2015, German police universities and academies⁴ have seen a rise in research projects intended to provide and test “innovative and practical approaches helping to optimize migration-related policing”.⁵ These include studies that aim at developing mobile, contactless identity verification technologies (MEDIAN) and audio-based country-of-origin recognition technologies (AUDEO), evaluating cross-border security cooperation and migration management (HUMAN+) and measures to combat human smuggling (stratum) or re-examining the impact of immigration on the police organization (MIGRATE).

The role of police academies, universities and other research facilities in the production of knowledge on migration has so far received little scholarly interest in STS and Migration Studies.⁶ Police institutions are increasingly successful in closing off access and thus preventing critical investigations of their own research practices in advance. This caution points to the ambivalent character of police organizations, which, as Michael Jasch (2019, p. 235) argues, vehemently push into the public sphere and engage in public debates, but at the same time strive to obscure the public’s view inside the police apparatus. However, critical analyses of police knowledge production on migration are much needed as police knowledge about migration is neither *innocent* (Proctor, 2018) nor *neutral* (Stierl, 2020): It is interwoven in and legitimized by (postcolonial) processes and logics of governing ‘the other’ (Agozino, 2003; Müller, 2014). Migration-related police knowledge can be used to inform violent regulatory interventions against migrants and people of color that are often harmful and can end deadly (see, for example, Abdul-Rahman et al., 2020 on racist police violence in Germany). Historian Micol Seigel (2018, p. 12) argues that all police work is “violence work” because the omnipresent potential to exercise violence is at the core of police power. This violence is highly

⁴The training of police officers in Germany is largely academicized (Jasch, 2019). Prospective police officers are prepared for the higher services within the framework of a BA program at *Berufsakademien* (vocational academies) and *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) of the federal states or a MA program at the German Police University in Münster/Westphalia. In addition to providing students with historical, psychological, criminological, legal, and sociological knowledge deemed relevant to police work, research is also conducted at these training institutions—by both police and academically socialized personnel.

⁵The above quotation is taken from the project description of the research project MIGRATE led by the German Police University and translated by ourselves. The project page is available at https://www.dhpol.de/departements/departement_I/FG_I.3/projekt_migrate.php

⁶There is, of course, a huge body of literature discussing the challenges of doing research on, with, and in the police forces. We would argue, however, that this is primarily the effect of the field of police research coming to terms with itself, while other fields of research have not yet taken police seriously enough as knowledge producers.

intersectional and affects not only, but especially, multi-marginalized individuals and groups (Thompson, 2021a).

Taking into account that the police are repeatedly the target of sharp criticism, including from academics (Loick, 2018), we see two ways of *thinking-from-and-for*: First, we propose to extend the critique of the violent quality of everyday encounters with the police to police research activities. Thinking from the margins and through social struggles while *thinking with care* about the production of police knowledge on migration then implies a shift in perspective. Following Katja Franko Aas' (2012, p. 16) postcolonial critique of criminology's North-South divide, this commits researchers of police to develop a "peripheral vision" and to start with those being policed and researched. What guides us then are precisely not the political priorities that determine which migration-related phenomena are deemed security-relevant and thus become the subject of further police research. It rather means using the experiences of migrants as entry points: Which forms and practices of securitization and racialization are migrants exposed to, how are these informed as well as perpetuated through police research activities and what counter-knowledge do migrants themselves produce to contest, for example, racial profiling of people of color through police forces (Wa Baile et al., 2019)? Vanessa E. Thompson shows that those subjected to racial profiling have a deep, long-standing knowledge of this violent and repressive practice (Thompson, 2018, p. 200). Taking seriously "the lived experiences and archives of situated knowledges of racialized and multi-marginalized subjects" (Thompson, 2021b, p. 29) helps to understand that racist policing as an institutional practice is by no means limited to the institution of the police itself, but rather operates "in juncture with other institutions such as juridical institutions, medical institutions, welfare institutions and the media" (ibid., p. 30). Moreover, *thinking with care* about and through the social struggles of those most affected by police violence points towards ways to criticize and counter repressive police practices.

Thinking in this vein, some scholars imply a radical approach by calling for researchers of the police to take action and join the diverse struggles against violent and racist policing. In a controversial piece, Jaime A. Alves (2021) argues that it is not enough for ethnographers to unravel the violent state and non-state actors, processes and institutions of policing. He rather calls for "advancing an insurgent intellectual movement that pushes toward police abolition in the contemporary world" (ibid., p. 101). Alves' take on thinking from and for the margins and through social struggles refuses "to legitimize, 'humanize', and promote the reforming of the police" (ibid., p. 108). Following this line of thought, *thinking with care* about the production of police knowledge on migration could easily be (mis)taken as a call to take police vulnerability more seriously. A debate we do not intend to engage in. However, there are also some practical and conceptual pitfalls to the reading offered by Alves. Positioning one's research in this way will likely block access to the field and harm one's own reputation and career in academia. More important, it might also reify a quite problematic 'us versus them' attitude. The 'other' is no longer the migrant but an imagined academic counterpart: the supposedly uncritical, anti-feminist and postcolonial police researcher.

But big-data-based, statistical and police-led research on migration are far from being unified, homogenous fields. Puig de la Bellacasa's work helps us to critically question our own motives and assumed oppositions as researchers interested in the production of police knowledge on migration. *Thinking-from-and-for* reminds us of looking for moments of contention, for frictions and struggles in police research institutions. There are significant differences between police academies and universities regarding which type of research on migration-related phenomena is conducted and how. Some of them have the necessary capacities and the will of the leading staff to undertake long term research projects and also cooperate with civilian universities for this purpose. Others, however, see themselves primarily as training institutions without a scientific mission (Jasch, 2019, p. 238). Moreover, migration knowledge producers in police research institutions have diverse academic biographies which inform their diverse agendas, sometimes contradicting the intentions of the organization. Intra-organizational moments of tension within the process of producing police knowledge on migration have the potential to irritate and challenge traditional ideas and perceptions of securitized otherness. Engaging with critical researchers working in the police requires a great deal of empathy and sensitivity, on the one hand so as not to harm them and their careers, and on the other hand to gain access to these critical positions in the first place. However, moments of tension and negotiation do not only arise where 'colleagues' at police academies—who may perceive themselves as migrant, critical, reflexive or whatever—resist and contradict institutional constraints and patterns of interpretation of migration-related phenomena. Such moments can also arise when external actors enter into exchange with police research institutions—for example, when they are involved as partner organizations in police research projects, or when specialized coaches or activist groups work with police forces in workshops, trainings and seminars on issues of intercultural competence or against racist biases in policing (Schäfer, 2023). Their struggles can be the starting point for migration research interested in police knowledge that does not take the conditions and intentions of knowledge production as given, but as contested.

4.4 Conclusion

In this article, we argue for *thinking with care* as a valuable practice for reflexive migration research analyzing the practices of other migration researchers who produce knowledge on migration and thereby shape realities, perceptions and politics of migration. How can we study the knowledge production of other migration researchers without creating or reinforcing an 'us versus them' attitude? How can we engage in productive dialogue with our 'colleagues' who often work for (more) powerful institutions? How can we act responsibly in light of the multiple and complex power relations at play? How can we interact with other knowledge producers in a way that we scrutinize not only their politics of knowledge production but also critically reflect upon our own research practices and positionalities?

Drawing on feminist, critical and reflexive approaches to knowledge production in other fields of study, we propose a research perspective that we call *double reflexivity*. Applying this perspective to study the production of knowledge on migration, we suggest a research practice that is critical and caring at the same time. Mobilizing concepts developed by María Puig de la Bellacasa, we outline six strategies to *think with care* about knowledge production in Migration Studies. *Thinking-with* other knowledge producers highlights the common grounds and possibilities for collaboration within this heterogeneous academic community. However, it can also mean to analyze the ways other migration researchers think in order to reflect upon our own unquestioned categories and implicit assumptions. Second, we can make use of the methodological or theoretical innovations of other strands of migration scholarship to produce knowledge on migration ourselves. The concept of *dissenting-within* in turn directs attention to the conflicts, power relations and divergent positions within the imagined community of Migration Studies. Personally engaging within this community through field research, enables to acknowledge the ambivalent positions of individual researchers working for (more) powerful institutions and the potentially conflictual relations among different theoretical or methodological perspectives—including our own. For this strategy to be effective, however, we need to accept the agency and agenda of our research participants and endure conflicts, tensions and hesitations as being normal parts of a research relationship. Finally, *thinking-from-and-for* shifts the focus to alternative epistemologies of knowledge that arise from the margins and through social struggles. First, this means to think about the production of knowledge on migration from the standpoint of the objects of study, that is from the angle of the migrants themselves. Second, this means to look for and think from marginalized, divergent and less powerful positions within Migration Studies that are hardly heard, contested or perhaps even suppressed.

Producing knowledge on the production of knowledge on migration is a risky and potentially harmful endeavor. We risk being too critical or too uncritical towards ‘our colleagues’, we risk demanding more self-reflexivity from others without being self-reflexive ourselves, and we risk speaking about others instead of speaking with them. In an academic system with strong formal hierarchies, powerful gatekeepers and precarious labor conditions,⁷ researching knowledge practices of other researchers can even be harmful to individuals’ reputations and careers. Therefore, we do not only need to reflect on strategies to think with care—as we do in this article—but also on “the very conditions of possibility for care” (Martin et al., 2015, p. 635) in a system that often couldn’t care less about care.

⁷On knowledge production under conditions of the neoliberal university see also Hernández-Albújar and Konyali (Chap. 16) in this volume.

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Chapter 5

The Crisis of Representation and the Reflexive Turn in Migration Studies



Manuel Dieterich and Boris Nieswand

5.1 Introduction

In a newspaper review of the first issue of the German *Zeitschrift für Migrationsforschung / Journal of Migration Studies* published in 2021, the journalist Gerald Wagner (2021) expressed his bewilderment about the state of debate in migration studies: “Reading the recently published first issue reveals a discipline whose tolerance of the heterogeneity of its approaches must be perceived as an irreconcilable discord [...] If one article still [...] wants to hold on to terms that are firmly established in the discipline, in politics, and in society, the very same terms are pounded into the ground in the next article.”¹ Without overgeneralising this comment in a German newspaper, the expression of bewilderment points to complications in the field of migration studies. What Wagner interprets as “irreconcilable discord”, we argue, is indicative of a crisis of representation that has been simmering in European migration studies for some time, but has gained momentum in recent years. With crisis of representation, we are referring to insecurities and unease that result from a delegitimisation of established forms of academic authority to speak and write about ‘discriminable subjects’ in general and migrants and their descendants in particular. In doing so, we draw on an understanding of representation that was formulated in science and technology studies (Latour, 1987, p. 72). It merges a political conception of representation as “delegation of authority to speak and act on behalf of others” with “a semiotic conception of a sign that

¹Translated from German to English by the authors.

M. Dieterich (✉) · B. Nieswand
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
e-mail: manuel.dieterich@uni-tuebingen.de; boris.nieswand@uni-tuebingen.de

‘speaks’ on behalf of its object” (Lynch, 1994, p. 140). Lynch further argues that “this theoretical move [...] encourages [...] analysts to interrogate various ‘representatives’ and ‘representations’ in, of, and around science in order to unravel lines and networks of power” (ibid.).

The suspicion that academic representations are involved in the reproduction of unjust power structures concerns key terms of migration studies, such as integration, culture, migrant, identity or society, which have shaped academic and public discourses for decades and are still influential. These developments were encouraged by a new wave of critical scholarship that aims at “problematizing dominant discourses within and outside of academia” (Vacchelli, 2018, p. 73). The crisis of representation is a constant reinstatement of Wilhelm Schinkel’s (2019, p. 8) sceptical question: “But what if the alternative is just another form of imposition that constitutes migration studies?”

At the centre of the crisis of representation are two aspects: First, the critique of linguistic forms of representations, which are suspected to reinforce and to reify negative representations of migration and migrants. Secondly, the question of who can or should have the authority to speak in the name of science about migrants and migrations. This also concerns questions of positionality and the embodiment of these power relations. Recent debates about new racism, critical race theory (e.g. Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Raghuram, 2022) and decoloniality (e.g. de Sousa Santos, 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) have raised questions about who should have the legitimation to represent groups that are seen as vulnerable to discrimination and devaluation, such as migrants and/or non-white segments of the population. This criticism implies the suspicion that persons who do not share a specific set of experiences—like being made the object of racism or sexism—could be more likely to affirm pre-existing structures of inequality.

Although these critiques have raised a sense of uncertainty about academic authority, it is not so clear what concretely should follow from them (Marguin et al., 2021): Which forms of representation of ‘migrant others’ are il/legitimate? What are the normative standards by which it is evaluated? Shall scientific representations distinguish themselves from political self-representations of marginalised groups? In how far do methodologies or theories matter for making knowledge production less dependent on personal experiences?

In order to unfold our argument, we will first take a closer look at the crisis of representation in anthropology in the 1980s and 1990s. This will help us to develop what we call the *paradigm of reflexivity*. While the first part of the paper deals with more general aspects of the nexus of reflexivity and representation, the second part will be concerned more specifically with migration studies. In the concluding remarks, we will make suggestions on how the relation between the paradigm of reflexivity and the pluralism within migration studies, which was the object of Gerald Wagner’s bewilderment, can be better understood and organised. As the literature already cited indicates, our article is situated at the intersection of a German and English-speaking field of Western European migration studies. This is the social position from where we speak. However, we hope that some of the ideas that will be presented are useful beyond this context.

This article is an exercise in reflexive theory building about reflexivity. It does not aim to develop a specific understanding of reflexivity within a particular theoretical paradigm, but rather asks what reflexivity can mean if a paradigmatic diversity of approaches to reflexivity is taken into account. As modality of dealing with epistemic diversity, the article develops a reflexive meta-theory within which the plurality of reflexivity approaches can be better understood and put into a meaningful relationship.

5.2 The Crisis of Representation² in Anthropology

In a first step, we want to explore how what we call crisis of representation relates to calls to “push forward a reflexive (and self-reflexive) perspective within migration studies”, as it is formulated on the webpage of the IMISCOE Standing Committee for Reflexivities in Migration Study.³ To this end, we make a short detour to the name-giving crisis of representation in social and cultural anthropology that unsettled the discipline especially in the 1980s and 1990s. In this context, the volume “Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) was most influential. It presented a “metareflection” (Rabinow, 1986, p. 251) of ethical, political and epistemological considerations and problems from which a crisis of representation was concluded. Although on a closer reading the volume “covered a quite broad and at times contradictory spectrum of positions” (Zenker & Kumoll, 2010, p. 17), it left a deep mark on anthropology as a discipline. Particularly influential was James Clifford’s (1986) contribution that drew on post-modern literary theory in order to deconstruct the stylistic devices and tropes of the genre of ethnographic realism. Other authors criticised the text-centredness of this approach (Asad, 1986, p. 164) and its “obsession with epistemology” (Rabinow, 1986, p. 242). They emphasised the importance of political economy for understanding anthropological representations as a situated practice. James, Hockney and Dawson (1997, p. 2) concluded retrospectively that the main contribution of the Writing Culture debate was to become a magnifying glass for the “uncertainties about anthropology’s subject matter (traditionally ‘the other’), its method (traditionally participant observation), its medium (traditionally a monograph), and its intent (traditionally information rather than practice)”. These cracks in the realistic foundation of anthropological knowledge production contributed significantly to the rise of the concept of reflexivity. It allowed to speak of a “reflexive turn” (McCarthy, 1992, p. 636) already in the early 1990s. The “paradigm of reflexivity” (Willerslev, 2016, p. X) promised to offer an epistemological stance from which canonic

²When we speak of a crisis of representation, we do not mean a singular event; instead we mean to use the term to draw attention to intellectual developments in a larger temporal framework that have led to periodic climaxes since the 1980s.

³Cf. <https://www.imiscoe.org/research/standing-committees/927-reflexive-migration-studies>, retrieved February 28, 2025.

knowledge and established power relations could be challenged and “alternatives to realist epistemology” (Woolgar, 1988, p. 302) be explored.

5.3 The Reflexive Triad

The reflexive turn within the social sciences can be abstractly described as *a shift towards the immanence of academic knowledge production* that is, that scientific knowledge cannot be separated from the social processes and power relations within which it is produced. Or in other words: Immanence means migration studies operate within the realms of society, politics, morality and history and not outside from them. It is based on the idea that the “real is relational” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 3). Relational epistemologies rely on the presumption that ‘reality’ can neither be reduced to the qualities of the objects of observation nor to the consciousness of a subject or their theoretical apparatus. It is rather conceived as an effect which emerges from a net of social relations that connect objects and subjects with each other. Knowledge is produced and mobilised through practices like observing, listening, reading, analysing or writing that transcend the binary divide between subjects and objects of research and connect them in specific ways and under specific circumstances. Reflexivity is the attempt to explore and account for the social relations (re-)produced in these practices as these are the conditions of a possibility of knowing. In this understanding, the main fallacy of positivism or realism is to “produce [epistemic] objects in which the relation of the analyst to the object is” not reflected but “unwittingly projected” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 42).

Following this argumentation, reflexivity is crucial for the epistemic validations of knowledge in post-positivist thinking. It signifies the “recursive process”⁴ (Lynch, 2000, p. 27) by which observers acquire knowledge about the constitutive relations of knowing which otherwise would be projected onto its objects. Reflexivity is an epistemological imperative that follows from the assumption of the relationality of epistemic practices. *Relationality* and *reflexivity* are closely connected to questions of *positionality* or standpoint (Haraway, 1988, p. 578). Relations can only exist if there are positions that can be related and from where it can be reflected upon these relations. In this sense, reflexive epistemologies reject the subject-object dualism of realist epistemologies and are instead based on the conceptual triad of reflexivity, relationality and positionality. However, the reflexive triad does not specify *what* should be reflected upon and *which* types of positions and relations should receive attention. These questions will be explored in the following.

⁴The literal meaning of the Latin word *reflectere* is to bend back.

5.4 Reflecting About What?

In order to specify objects and modalities of reflexivity, we will cursorily discuss aspects of the works of some iconic authors. It is, above all, considered a didactic means to look briefly at some key intellectual problems of reflexivity.⁵

Probably the most influential author of the reflexive turn is Michel Foucault. His philosophy of knowledge has made the relationship between power and knowledge its main epistemic object. Foucault (1978, p. 83) criticised the “promise of a liberation” that is implied in the modernist understanding of scientific progress and enlightenment. Truth and knowledge, so Foucault, are not emancipatory weapons against (traditional) structures of domination but manifestations of power: “The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power” (ibid.). Starting from there, Foucault deconstructed key concepts of modern thinking and showed how they were instrumental for constructing and governing marginalised and stigmatised groups (Foucault, 1971, 1978, pp. 43–47). Foucault’s work is a conceptual framework to closer examine the links between the “establishment of a biological caesura between [...] subgroups [...] of the human species” (Mbembe, 2019 [2016], p. 71) and the exertion of control, domination and violence. Judith Butler (1999 [1990]) developed Foucault’s thinking further and showed how the gender binary and the knowledge and practices that are articulated to it have become a central disciplining power over the body.

For the reflexive turn of migration studies, two Foucauldian ideas are of particular importance. First, in contemporary societies there exists a close relationship between questions of (true) knowledge on the one hand and questions of power over bodies, lives, identities and mobilities on the other hand. Second, the epistemic “power to define others” (Sarup, 1993, p. 67) associated with medical or administrative categorisations contributes significantly to the inequality between different modes of being. From this perspective it can be concluded that what appears as migration or who appears as a migrant cannot be separated from the authorities’ will to know, to control and to let live and die. Since migration studies are involved in the production of categories and knowledge about migrants and migrations, it has to be asked how their involvement in the governing of migration and populations has to be understood and evaluated (Robertson, 2019; Dahinden et al., 2021; Amelina, 2022).

Pierre Bourdieu’s work was another important contribution to the reflexive turn. He argued that socialisation in a particular socioeconomic class context shapes the formation of a person’s largely unconscious but relatively stable action-guiding habitus. Habitus functions as grammar of practice and thereby contributes to the

⁵ Several proposals on distinguishing dimensions or versions of reflexivity have, of course, already been made. Michael Lynch (2000), for example, distinguishes 20 different academic uses of the term reflexivity in order to illustrate its fuzziness. Marguin et al. (2021) differentiate three dimensions that address different scales of sociality as epistemic object of reflexivity (biography, interaction and social field). Although we in part echo the thoughts of these authors, our typology of four modalities takes a different starting point with the reflexive triad, which entails other distinctions.

reproduction of larger structures of inequality through individuals' activities (Bourdieu, 1979). Because "the art of applying knowledge" is "inseparable from a habitus" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53), it also affects academic practice. In his later work, Bourdieu increasingly focused on exploring the operational logics of medium-scale analytical entities which he called social fields. In this framework he emphasised the importance of "the position that the analyst occupies, not in the broader social structure, but in the microcosm of the academic field, that is, in the objective space of possible intellectual positions offered to him or her at a given moment" (Wacquant, 1992, p. 39). Bourdieu distinguished between "narcissistic reflexivity" that focusses on the individual researcher and their personal experiences and sensitivities in the research process and scientific reflexivity, which according to him should involve a sociological analysis of the specific field of knowledge production in which the researchers are situated (Bourdieu, 1993). The key difference between these two forms is that scientific reflexivity serves the goal of improving scientific knowledge, whereas narcissistic reflexivity is understood as an "introspective confessionism" that turns self-humiliation into self-heroisation (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012, pp. 590–591).

Especially ethnographers (Breidenstein et al., 2020) added to this discussion that social scientists are not only situated in an academic field but also in their respective fields of study. In this respect, for instance context, situational relevancies (Werbner, 1996; Nieswand, 2017) and the proximity to specific groups of participants in the field of study (de Sousa Santos, 2018) matter in terms of what can be known about a social field.

Three points can be taken from both Bourdieu and the ethnographers. First, the habitus as incorporated class position influences how people learn, what they know and how they deal with acquired knowledge. Second, the position within an academic field with its internal differentiation (e.g. quantitative vs. qualitative methodologies) shapes the scope and the modality of what can be known and represented. Third, situational relations and positions within the field of study matter in terms of knowledge production. Reflexivity in the Bourdieusian sense is epistemological work that aims at explicating, understanding and explaining the tacit and unconscious effects of social relations and positionalities at different scales of sociality for the production and application of knowledge.

Edward Said's work on Orientalism is a good example to illustrate the postcolonial path of reflexivity. In his critique of Western practices of knowledge production (1979, p. 205), Said argued that the Orient was manufactured as an "epistemic object" through academic and literary writing since the eighteenth century. In Western discourses 'the Orient' was represented as the fundamental Other of the Occident. He emphasised that the academic writings that depicted 'Oriental Others' as inferior and fundamentally different from Europeans were "instruments of conquest" (Said, 1979, p. 309). Consequently, overcoming colonial entanglements means to critically question and re-work Western epistemologies in order to facilitate more symmetrical ways of understanding and representing others. Reflexivity means for Said above all to become aware that "the study of human experience usually has an ethical, to say nothing of a political consequence" (1979, p. 327) and

that scholars should take these consequences into account when they engage in epistemic practices.

The postcolonial and de-colonial critique of hegemonic forms of knowledge production put forward by Said and many others (i.e. Chakrabarty, 2009; de Sousa Santos, 2015; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) entailed that scientific representations of groups of ‘Others’, including “migrant Others” (Mecheril, 2005) and subalterns (Spivak, 2003), had to take into account the suspicion that they might contribute to the reproduction of racism and colonialism (Mayblin & Turner, 2021). This also applies to the field of migration research in Western Europe.

The last two authors we want to draw attention to are Sandra Harding (1986) and Donna Haraway (1988). They explored from a feminist perspective how engaging with questions of positionality and situatedness could lead to a reflexive mode of knowledge production they called standpoint epistemology. Sandra Harding (1986, p. 9) argued against the modernist idea that questions of scientific knowledge could be separated from political questions of domination. Donna Haraway in turn prominently criticised what she called “the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere”, which for her implies that white male European and US-American perspectives are taken as a neutral universal standard, while female, non-white and non-Western perspectives were considered particularistic and deviant (see also Dutta & Basu, 2021). Haraway concluded that the word “objectivity” sounds “nasty [...] to feminist ears” (1988, p. 581) because it implies the refusal to reflect on positionality and its consequences for knowledge production. Moreover, Haraway, Harding and other feminist scholars emphasised the importance of social movements and their struggles for challenging dominant forms of knowledge. Practices of resistance bear the potential to think about social relations in a non-hegemonic way and can therefore act as impulses for the development of new, more emancipative epistemologies.

We can take away three points from the feminist epistemologies on the question of reflexivity. First, positionalities matter for the production of knowledge. Second, positionalities are intersections of inequalities constituted by larger regimes or systems of oppression and domination such as patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and racism. Third, social movements which resist and criticise experienced forms of domination have a strategic role for identifying power relations that require reflexivity.

5.5 Making Sense of the Plurality of Reflexivity Discourses

This short review was meant to prepare the theoretical ground for developing a typology of modalities of reflexivity. Generally, we understand reflexivity as a “recursive process” (Lynch, 2000, p. 27) by which academic observers and ‘representers’ of social reality inquire into the epistemically relevant relations and positions in which they are involved and which they would otherwise project onto the objects of knowledge. The promise of reflexivity is that taking into account relationality and positionality contributes to a better understanding and challenging of

hegemonic forms of knowledge. But how are positions identified that need to be made the epistemic object of reflexivity? One method is what Mari Matsuda called asking “the other question”: “When I see something that looks racist, I ask, ‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, ‘Where is the heterosexism in this?’ When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, ‘Where are the class interests in this?’” (1991, p. 1189). Matsuda’s method suggests that epistemic objects of reflexivity can be identified by applying a limited number of theoretically selected questions. Analytically, these questions refer to a triad built out of dimensions of social inequality, large-scale regimes of domination and systems of classification (race, class, gender, sexual orientation).

An alternative approach to reflexivity can be found in parts of the qualitative methods literature. Drawing on theoretical traditions such as phenomenology, pragmatism and ethnomethodology, some qualitative scholars have argued that especially standardised quantitative methods and different kinds of grand social theories might be suspected of lacking reflexivity in regard to their theoretical impositions. As a corrective, it was demanded that researchers applying quantitative methodologies be empirically more sensitive to the specificities of social fields and the perspectives of participants: “Openness” and context sensitivity in this framework “means not simply to confront an empirical phenomenon with sociological questions, but to expect from its exploration the emergence of those questions with which it can be opened up from within”⁶ (Strübing et al., 2018). Georg Breidenstein and Helga Kelle (1998, pp. 54–55) present a vignette from a school ethnography that illustrates what it means to raise research questions from within: “When I came into the room at 12:50, Karin (the teacher) and a group of boys were sitting on the carpet. I [...] said: ‘Ah, you have boys’ conference, I’ll leave.’ But the group contradicted me [...] According to the timetable, it was remedial teaching.”⁷ What Breidenstein and Kelle highlight is that it was the ethnographer’s preoccupation with gender relations that made her see a group of boys instead of a group of individuals with spelling difficulties attending a remedial teaching class. Becoming reflexive in this context means challenging one’s own cognitive categories and theoretical presumptions.

According to Matsuda, reflexivity is a theoretically informed intervention that will reveal underlying political and socio-economic power structures and inequalities in empirical research that might not be visible otherwise. In contrast, Breidenstein and Kelle see reflexivity as a corrective to the epistemic power of categorical pre-decisions and grand theoretical narratives, which includes Matsuda’s theoretically founded demand that “the other question” be asked. Even on the basis of these two methods of reflexivity alone, without looking for any others, it becomes clear that reflexivity is not ‘one thing’ but rather adds a new layer of complexity to academic knowledge production. It remains true that “in a world without gods or absolutes,

⁶Translation from German to English by the authors.

⁷Translation from German to English by the authors.

attempting to be reflexive takes one no closer to a central source of illumination than attempting to be objective” (Lynch, 2000, p. 47).

But if reflexivity does not help to solve the epistemic problems raised by the crisis of representation, what is it good for? We suggest that reflexivity’s main contribution is not to restore unambiguous academic authority over epistemic objects by replacing objectivity by reflexivity but to offer ways to better deal with the contingency of claims to truth implied in the epistemological and ‘methodological pluralism’ (Mitchell, 2009) of migration studies. In a different context, Niklas Luhmann highlighted that one of the most important contributions of reflexivity to the development of Christian theology was that Christians at one point came to understand “that pagans ... [were] not pagans for themselves” (Luhmann, 1995, p. 457) but only for Christians. This reflexive ‘discovery’ made it possible for Christians to at least try to understand these ‘pagan others’ in their own terms and thereby created a basis for building relations to them beyond destruction, exclusion or proselytisation. The equivalent to what ‘pagans’ are to Christians in the case of migration studies are not the ‘migrants’, but those social scientists who work on the basis of different epistemological, methodological or theoretical grounds. In this sense, it can be argued that reflexivity unfolds its epistemic potential as a means of self-relativisation through attempts to understand ‘epistemic others’ in their own terms. Reflexivity is a recursive process that becomes progressive, i.e. that reaches out to the world.⁸

5.6 Four Modalities of Reflexivity

Our arguments above have identified the intended epistemic status of the four modalities of reflexivity we want to present in the following: Each modality is supposed to offer a different pathway to select relations/positions that can constitute an epistemic object of reflexivity. They are neither exclusive nor exhaustive. Nevertheless, each of them is located differently in the theoretical landscape of the social sciences. Readers who are used to thinking within a global political economy or a feminist-intersectional framework will probably tend to find Modality 1 (see below) to be most relevant, interactionists Modality 2 and activist scholars Modality 4. Our own position is shaped by Modality 3. However, if we understand reflexivity as an attempt to practice self-relativisation through epistemic agility, we should refrain from subsuming dimensions under one dominant framework but explore the epistemic potentials that arise from using different modalities of reflexivity in their own terms. That said, reflexive capacities are also not free from external constraints. Some modalities of reflexivity might rely on specific personal experiences of discrimination, others on access to academic methods or theory courses. Nevertheless, since the paradigm of reflexivity presumes that everybody is capable of making

⁸In this context it has also to be taken into consideration that the overall relevance of the social sciences or migration studies for the (re)production of global inequalities is relatively marginal.

attempts to engage with different reflexive modalities on their own terms, nobody can be reduced to a single position or set of relations. This does not contradict the presumption that global social inequalities have an impact on them. However, their predictive power is higher with respect to spheres of exclusion than in respect to spheres of inclusion. While it is highly contingent what kind of research individuals classified as similar according to larger dimensions of inequality will conduct or publish about, it is relatively safe to assume that individuals who do not have access to an academic education will not receive research grants and will not publish an article in an academic journal. The distinction between spheres of inclusion and exclusion helps to differentiate between political efforts that aim at changing the conditions of inclusion within the field of academic knowledge production and reflexive efforts that aim at exploring the impact of positionality and relationality on modalities of knowledge production. By definition, the latter applies only to cases in which some degree of inclusion has taken place.

We arrive at a brief summary of the four modalities:

1. **Intersectional Reflexivity:** Intersectional reflexivity depends on a bird's eye perspective on society from which encompassing dimensions and categories of power/inequality, such as race, class and gender are deduced. The relevance of the categories articulated to large-scale regimes of domination is considered omnipresent. While the intersectionality perspective does not necessarily presuppose a specific socio-spatial scale, it does have an affinity to macro-theoretical understandings of inequality. Intersectional reflexivity allows for asking how relatively pervasive dimensions of inequality—like those between men, women and queer persons, rich and poor, white and black persons or citizens of wealthy and poor nation-states—relate to historically rooted regimes of domination such as patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and nationalism. Of particular interest in this framework are the intersections of dimensions of inequality and their effects on personal positionalities, social relations and scientific knowledge production. Furthermore, intersectional reflexivity makes it possible to address who is structurally excluded from access to the field of academic knowledge production and to reflect about potential consequences of these representation voids.
2. **Situational Reflexivity:** As we have shown above, some qualitative researchers follow the “flat ontology” (Schatzki, 2016) of practice theory in which sociality is not seen as a structurally layered entity extending from the micro-level of interactions to the macro-level of global power structures, but rather as a complex interweaving of situated and emplaced practices, knowledges and objects. Against this background, it is the primary task of researchers to re-construct the salience of specific positions/relations within the framework of situated interactions. It does not exclude addressing the relevance of race, class or gender but emphasises situational forces which structure being and knowing (Hirschauer, 2001). From this perspective, the most salient asymmetry, for instance, in the case of interviewing is between interviewers and interviewees, playing football between players and referees, health care practices between doctors and patients and so forth. Situational reflexivity allows to ask to what extent proximity or

distance to situational positions influences the knowledge that is produced within and about a social field. Situational positionality should thus not be seen as a source of distortion that can or should be avoided but as a source of knowledge that has to be reflected upon methodologically (Breidenstein et al., 2020, p. 99).

3. **Academic Reflexivity:** As Bourdieu has emphasised, academic knowledge production requires researchers not only to become part of a field of research but also of an academic field. It requires socialisation in academic institutions, the reading of specific literature, the selection of scientific methods and the publishing of results in specific journals or book series. The academic field in which one is situated is crucial for evaluating the quality, relevance and innovativeness of academic knowledge. Making a contribution to it demands from researchers that they position themselves competently in relation to an accepted range of methods, theories and research topics. Innovation and critique are integral parts of academic discourses, but are only recognised if they can be related to an established body of knowledge. Reflexivity in this context means making efforts to give account of the possibilities and limits of knowing that result from social positioning in specific academic networks, institutions and knowledge traditions. In this context, it has also to be considered that the actors, networks and institutions that constitute the academic field are located in larger historical, disciplinary, linguistic and geopolitical landscapes that differ in regard to their internal structure and the amount of academic capital they incorporate and produce. Inequalities between academic institutions, countries and world regions have effects on the field and the modalities of academic knowledge production. Nevertheless, at least in the spheres of inclusion, the link between the position in the global political economy and in the academic field appears to be relatively loose. As an indicator for the produced content of academic knowledge, academic discipline, methodology or field of research appears to be much better suited than the positionality of researchers in a global political economy.
4. **Political Reflexivity:** Due to the reappraisal of the epistemic role of activism, the question of how to position oneself in regard to activists' political agendas or other forms of political practice has become more significant as a modality of reflexivity within the field of migrations studies. This includes the question of how to relate to state institutions and state-sponsored research. Reflexivity in this modality means exploring the epistemological and methodological consequences that proximity to or distance from activists, policy-makers or political organisations have or should have for academic knowledge production. In this framework, the self-ascription of not being political can also be made an epistemic object of reflexivity. It allows us to ask into which political space of resonance academic knowledge falls that is understood as apolitical by its producers. Political reflexivity also involves epistemic boundary work with regard to where the limits of academically legitimated knowledge are and where the expression of political opinions or even political propaganda begins (e.g. in the case of the denial of the Holocaust or climate change, to name two clear-cut cases). In this framework, political reflexivity requires recourse to quality standards of

Table 5.1 Modalities of reflexivity.

| Type of relations | Type of positionality | Object of reflexivity | Examples |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| Intersectional | Intersections of structural dimensions of inequality | Structural effects of domination on knowledge production | Race-, class-, gender-relations |
| Situational | Positions within interactions | Effects of situational proximity/distance on knowledge production | Interviewers, interviewees |
| Academic | Positions within the academic field | Effects of proximity/distance to academic positions on knowledge production | Ethnographers, quantitative researchers; life course of researchers |
| Political | Positions in relation to social movements, political organisations and policy-makers | Effects of proximity/distance to political positions on knowledge production | Activist scholars, members of political think tanks |

academic knowledge production such as the validity of truth claims, methodological reliability, theoretical plausibility and originality (Table 5.1).

We have emphasised that while the four modalities are not mutually exclusive and interact with one another, they should still be considered as analytically distinct. They unfold their epistemic potential only if they are not subsumed under a single theoretical umbrella but explored in their own terms. One example of realising the epistemic potential is Khazaei's contribution (Chap. 9) in this volume, in which the author makes use of at least two modalities of reflexivity—the intersectional and the academic—in order to critically analyse the academic (non-)engagement with race and racism in the field of migration studies.

5.7 Reflexivity in Migration Studies

We have argued here that post-positivist currents in European migration studies have led to a crisis of representation that has stimulated demands for more reflexivity (Nieswand & Drotbohm, 2014). These have addressed in particular (a) the relevance of politically constituted entities (especially the nation-state) in the construction of epistemic objects of migration studies (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003; Pott et al., 2018), (b) the question of how far migration research contributes to the ethnic, cultural or racial othering of migrants and the perpetuation of colonial legacies (Glick Schiller et al., 2006; Vertovec, 2007; Römhild, 2014; Dahinden, 2016; Will, 2019) and (c) the role that moral, ethical and political entanglements play in the construction of the epistemic objects of migration studies (Fassin, 2005; Nieswand, 2021). It has been argued that the demand for more reflexivity did not solve the epistemic insecurities triggered by the crisis of representation but led de

facto to a pluralisation of modalities of reflexivity that we have tried to capture by distinguishing four main types. Critical and postcolonial migration researchers reflect on how colonialism, racism, patriarchy, capitalism and their intersections influence migration policies and research agendas (de Genova, 2010; Lutz & Amelina, 2021). Ethnographic migration researchers are concerned about the effects of multiple situatedness and contextual positionalities on both their informant's life trajectories (Van Geel & Mazzucato, 2021) and their own knowledge production (Jaeger & Nieswand, 2022). Historians and sociologists reflect on how the situatedness of migration research within a historically and politically shaped academic field has shaped the development of its epistemic objects (Bommes & Thränhardt, 2010; Espahangizi, 2021). Researchers of undocumented and refugee migration discuss the possibilities and limits of engaged and applied scholarship (Hess & Lebuhn, 2014; Kraler & Perchinig, 2017).

In addition to these four modalities, one can also ask about the temporal dimension of how reflexivity evolved. In this respect, three waves can be distinguished. In the first wave the main question was how far the social construction of migrants and migrations in public discourses is articulated in processes of racialisation (Miles, 1982), cultural fundamentalism (Stolcke, 1995), or ethnic primordialism (Allahar, 1996). These works were part and parcel of a paradigm shift from realism to social constructivism within the social sciences. In this context, it was emphasised that ethnic and other socially constructed boundaries between groups should not be taken for granted but should better be seen as powerful constructs of exclusion and marginalisation whose appearance and maintenance requires sociological explanation (Brubaker, 2001). The focus came to be on the social means of organisation through which social and classificatory boundaries between migratory and non-migratory parts of the population were maintained. These boundaries and not 'the migrants' or their life courses as such constituted the objects of political discourse and epistemic practice. The second wave of reflexivity was especially influenced by the critiques of the ethnic lens and methodological nationalism. They modified the object of reflexivity by directing the recursive process more specifically towards knowledge production within migration studies. In doing so, they tied the imperative of reflexivity back to the field in which the researchers themselves were situated and thus ultimately to their own practices of knowledge production. While in the first wave it was still relatively easy for migration researchers to imagine themselves in a privileged epistemic position vis-à-vis other members of society, the turn towards immanence of the second wave created more insecurities and ambivalences in regard to the positionality of researchers. It includes doubts whether research should be organised along asymmetrical categories such as 'migrants' or 'ethnic minorities' or whether the use of these categories already contributes to the reproduction of inequality (Foroutan, 2018). The second wave, however, promised that migration researchers who become reflexive are in a superior epistemic position to those migration researchers who are not and therefore contribute to the reproduction of hegemonic knowledge. However, as we have argued, the hopes of the first wave and the second wave underestimated the internal dynamic of the reflexive turn. Since reflexivity could not restore academic authority but rather contributed to its

further erosion, we argue for a third wave of reflexivity in response to the pluralisation of reflexive modalities in the second wave. The goal of this wave of reflexivity could be gaining a better knowledge of one's own position by engaging with other modalities of reflexivity in their own terms. In this framework, reflexivity does not function as an attempt to restore a unified source for scientific authority but rather as a means for dealing with their pluralisation. Pluralisation means that the boundaries between academic knowledge production, politics, activism and ethics appear more blurry but not that they are obsolete. The examples of Holocaust and climate change deniers show that reflexivity does not exempt one from taking a position on the limits of academic pluralism. Acknowledging the need to draw boundaries by referring to immanent standards of academic knowledge production (e.g. methodology, theory, review of existing knowledge) constitutes the difference between arbitrariness and contingency as a *modus vivendi* of scientific knowledge production.

5.8 Reflecting About the Reflexivity Paradigm

In this contribution we described the rise of reflexivity as a reaction to epistemic and normative complications and insecurities, which we called a crisis of representation. Returning to the Writing Culture debate helped us to see that there are no general solutions to the sketched intellectual problems and suspicions. It might be worth reconsidering Johannes Fabian, who more than 30 years ago wrote that “to stop writing about the Other will not bring liberation” (1990, p. 760). The most important lesson to be drawn from attempts to engage with reflexivity is that neither unquestioned truth nor moral innocence can ever be achieved. The promise of reflexivity, as we understand it, is that exercises in self-relativisation increase the capacity to deal with a plurality of truth claims and imaginaries of the good. Moreover, the reflexivity paradigm can relieve especially younger researchers from finding solutions to an overwhelming set of intractable epistemic problems and moral suspicions. Since the reflexivity paradigm allows one to work with boundaries and limitations rather than condemning them, it facilitates pragmatic ways of academic knowledge production about migration in a contradictory, complex and unequal world. However, the paradigm of reflexivity also has limitations and risks. If it becomes an end in itself (Dean, 2021, p. 179), it can easily lead either to an abyss of infinite regression or to a narcissistic mode of self-representation that loses sight of the mandate of migration studies, which remains to provide a larger public with appropriate and reliable knowledge about migrants, migrations and the socio-economic and political conditions of their becoming.

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Part II
Knowledge Production and Power

Chapter 6

Decolonising This, Decolonising That: Beyond Rhetorical Decolonisation in Migration Studies



Parvati Raghuram and Gunjan Sondhi

6.1 Introduction

Decolonisation appears to be the new buzzword in academia in many parts of the world today (Bhambra et al., 2018). There is hardly a field that is untouched by discussions of decolonisation; coming to grips with the difficulties of colonial histories is, after all, an important responsibility and task as colonisation has damaged not only those who were colonised but also colonisers (Fanon, 2008). Moreover, colonisation still has ongoing effects. Coloniality manifests in epistemic authority, in research and what is defined as such, but also in how economic and political power shapes who does research where (Tuhiwai Smith, 2013). Decolonisation, which attempts to redress these wrongs, can then be a truly worthy endeavour.

Migration studies¹ too has begun to engage in questions of decolonisation (Vanyoro, 2019; Kosnick, 2021). Migration studies here refers to the interdisciplinary body of knowledge that speaks about the structures and infrastructures shaping migration and on migrant lives. It is not a coherent or single body but nevertheless

¹In referring to migration studies we are conscious that we are constituting a field. We recognise that the field is diverse and includes global scholarship in multiple disciplines on the topic of migration. It is also inhabited by a range of practitioners, academics and researchers who are all invested in the topic. We recognise these variations but also hold that there are practices such as publications in particular journals, circulation in migration conferences and representation in particular theoretical debates where some aspects of a more unified field may be observed. We also acknowledge that migration studies is however constituted from a particular place—in our case, a university in the UK. However, our own research has taken us to some other parts of the English-speaking academic world, particularly Africa and Asia.

P. Raghuram · G. Sondhi (✉)
The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
e-mail: parvati.raghuram@open.ac.uk; gunjan.sondhi@open.ac.uk

it has some dominant trends, as we discuss below. Moreover, as diasporic Indians living in the UK and engaging with Asian, North American and European literatures through our biographies and extending that a little to African migration research through our grants and publications, we also have our own conceptual and empirical lenses which limit and delimit our perspectives.

Migration studies is ideally suited to engage with the ideas and processes of decolonisation, as it “presupposes border epistemology, and border epistemology presupposes to dwell in the border” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014, p. 199). Mignolo’s (2011) border thinking drawing on Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2012) *Borderlands/La Frontera*, for instance, offers spatial vocabularies which contribute to migration research and decolonisation because of its’ emphasis on core concepts such as nation and migrant.

However, in adopting the language of decolonisation in research on borders, diasporas and migration studies more widely we need to ask ourselves who is doing the decolonisation, and from where is the problematic of colonisation being addressed. How is knowledge about migration being produced? How far are contemporary efforts to decolonise in migration studies centred in the global North, orientated within the boundaries drawn by epistemic colonialism, and undertaken without any real transfer of power to those who still do not have academic authority or power? This chapter argues that decolonising migration studies cannot be a rhetorical exercise alone. It points to some ways in which decolonisation as practised as an epistemic exercise is at risk of being colonised within the Western academy, especially when undertaken from within Fortress Europe and a post-Brexit Britain. It offers pointers to what decolonisation might entail in migration studies. In doing so, we, the authors also take inspiration from Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (2005) to reflect on some of the ways we too are complicit in this act of colonising decolonisation.

The chapter is organised into three sections. The following section outlines decolonisation and critiques of how it has been undertaken. Section three explores how decolonisation has been approached in migration studies and some of the risks in contemporary analysis. The final section concludes by offering some ways forward.

6.2 Decolonisation Gone Awry

The meaning and aims of decolonisation are varied. However, at its core is a demand for continuous and continual process of transfer of power towards those who have suffered most acutely due to colonialism and its aftermath. It thus involves dismantling the colonial matrix of power across several domains such as economy, authority and knowledge as they intersect with gender and sexuality (Emejulu, 2019), and race (Lugones, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2007; Gopal, 2021).

However, in its adoption, decolonisation has often been watered down so that decolonisation is simply a metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Moosavi, 2020). As

decolonisation has swept through disciplines, sometimes in rather superficial ways, it has become incorporated under the liberal paradigm of equality, diversity and inclusion. For instance, (Gosal & Loyola-Hernandez, 2022) point to how in Leeds University in the UK, as elsewhere, adding research by Black² and Brown scholars to the reading list and diversifying the literature available or recommended to students can parade as decolonisation. Similarly, the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in the UK is also critically reflecting on how decolonisation has been wrapped up under the agenda of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (RGS, n.d.). These groups recognise that decolonisation can become a way of name-checking. At worst, it generates new ground for colonisation.

Of course, even these steps have not been taken in most parts of the global North, with very little engagement by European countries in their own horrific engagement and entanglement in colonialism, slavery and the underpinning logic of White supremacy. For instance, Appiah and Yeboah Mireku (2020) write about the ways in which the Swiss have hardly engaged with decolonisation because they fail to recognise the extent to which the white ontology they pursue is based on a history of a colonialism without colonies (Purtschert et al., 2016) and has led to difficulties in even naming race as a Swiss problem (Boulila, 2019). Rather their coloniality simply mutated to fit into decolonial narratives. Similarly, Raphael-Hernandez and Wiegink (2020) discuss German colonial amnesia and the art of forgetting. This is true in migration studies too. For instance, the demand to be compensated for land lost by Swiss nationals who owned land in Algeria as Algeria got independence, points to the sense of entitlement over colonised populations that Europeans had, irrespective of whether they were the direct colonisers (Fois, 2019). Decolonisation is thus, a worthy endeavour, but how it has been done is often problematic.

Walter Mignolo, in conversation with Gaztambide-Fernández, usefully sets out how decolonisation has been mainstreamed in unhelpful ways (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014). First, it is used in name and operates through the circulating value that the term has in contemporary academic engagements. It has been thoroughly marketized with academics in the global North—*decolonising this and decolonising that*. Researchers use the term in their grant applications to improve the likelihood of success, as decolonisation is the latest fashionable paradigm in town. For instance, researchers who have never worked on any topic beyond Europe and have never aligned with or supported minoritised scholars in the university, gladly jumped on the bandwagon of decolonisation because this would get them a grant. Decolonisation translates into career progression for themselves, but they do not interrogate whether they have the right to write about decolonisation. New forms of coloniality in research funding (Noxolo, 2017) also extracts value from decolonisation by operating at a rhetorical level. It is centred on and centres the limited endeavours and proclamations, often of well-established white scholars. Racialised authors frequently remain unnamed (Puwar, 2020).

²We capitalise 'Black' because we see it as a political positioning that aims to address long-held discrimination within academia. It is not just a racial identity. As a result, 'white' is not capitalised in the same way.

Secondly, it is often offered as an alternative perspective and through the lens of epistemic relativism. This approach, often drawing on postmodern sensibilities, offers moral and ethical equivalence to different knowledge systems, belying the violence that is inherent to certain knowledges and ways of knowing. A list of citations, from different epistemologies at the end of a single sentence is one way in which this equivalence is exhibited. In effect, one can add decolonisation to one's research topic and stir. There is no fundamental rethink of what adopting decolonisation means for their existing conceptual frame. Decolonisation involves the pain of letting go of the privilege and comfort of a familiar episteme and the authority that one has established in those epistemic frameworks; it cannot and does not accommodate existing colonialist and racist epistemic positions.

Thirdly, and most commonly it degenerates into a politics of inclusion into existing forms of knowledge. This manifests in universities, for instance, through the guise of the neoliberal diversity governance. Colonisation is reduced to epistemic exclusion, so decolonisation academics gather in other epistememes to increase their knowledge base. They selectively pick the bits of other knowledge systems that enlarge their thinking, in effect, disengaging their extractions from the integrity of the knowledge systems within which it is based.

Moosavi (2020) argues that decolonisation is now simplified into something achievable by those in the global North as an individual endeavour. It often adopts reductionist appropriations of knowledges from the global South, frequently through citational practices alone³ (Bhattacharyya, 2018; Moosavi, 2022). It also relinquishes (or perhaps never takes up) the authority of academics who have power and are in socially dominant groups within the academy to change things within their institutions for those who are minoritised; decolonisation then sinks into nativism and tokenism.

However, decolonisation has been, and is, part of liberatory struggles. It does not involve a simple recovery of an innocent pre-colonial past but rather rights past wrongs. It is also global in scope—encompassing colonisers, colonised and those who benefited from coloniality (Siegenthaler & Bonilla, 2019). And it is deeply situated. It is not any struggle; it is particular struggles where people are positioned differently based on the located histories and present conditions. Most importantly, as Tuck and Yang (2012) have argued, it “requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 21). Social justice demands equality and equity through the just redistribution of resources and goods, and recognition of diversity within existing systems. It

³In this chapter the global South does not mean national territories that have borne the brunt of coloniality and racial capitalism (alone) but instead situates the sites of struggle against these, in many locations all over the world. It thus, recognises the failure of national decolonisation movements that only instituted new forms of extractivism in some former colonised countries. Moreover, in this chapter we recognise that the relation between anti-racism and decolonisation is complex and unfolding (Moosavi, 2022). We join authors who argue that colonialism and capitalism are built on the foundations of racial differentiation and so anti-capitalist and anti-colonial practices also need to be anti-racist to be meaningful or effective (Bhattacharyya, 2018).

focuses on the consequences of oppression (Fraser, 1995, 1998). Decolonisation, on the other hand, emphasises the sources of systemic dominance and oppression.

6.3 Decolonising Light—Migration Studies and Decolonisation and Their Story Thus Far

Several scholars writing about migration, particularly those in the global North, have engaged with versions of decolonisation. They have done so through publications (Schinkel, 2018), conference presentations, workshops and blog posts (Scuzzarello, 2020). Those interested in reflexivities and in gender and migration have been at the forefront of these endeavours.

However, these engagements raise questions such as: can migration studies be decolonised? Why does it need to be decolonised? Who should be doing this work? How should it be decolonised? Scholars have skipped these questions, instead, directly moving to ‘claiming’ decolonisation and thus offering a ‘light’ version that could potentially cause harm.

Migration scholars have argued that framing migration research as migration studies is itself a colonial endeavour (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2016; Kolar et al., 2020; Kosnick, 2021). Thus, there have been some slow and halting steps to make visible the coloniality of migration studies (Mayblin & Turner, 2020), institutions (Bradley, 2022), and policies (Çağlar, 2022). Researchers often critique coloniality from within the certainties of embodied privilege and socio-economic advantage. Epistemic communities, whose structures offer its’ contributors guarantees embedded in colonial desires—from grants to publications to career progression or acclaim—are reinforced rather than displaced or replaced through discussions of decoloniality. This is because “[d]ecolonial critiques have become a valuable currency within the intellectual, affective, relational, and material economies of mainstream Western educational institutions. Within these economies, people tend to seek solutions and alternatives to colonization within existing paradigms, regimes of property, and comfort zones” (Stein et al., 2020, p. 44). This is particularly so in the English-speaking world; the struggle to recognise coloniality in parts of Europe, the failure to name race and racism and to challenge anti-racism means that sometimes even these steps have not been taken elsewhere.

In this section, we will explore some steps that have been taken in migration studies in an attempt to decolonise before exploring the limits of those efforts. We primarily focus on the methodological challenges to migration studies, *who* does migration research (Sect. 6.3.1 below) and *how* (Sects. 6.3.2 and 6.3.3 below) as two elements of any methodology. In doing so, we agree with Samaddar (2020) that methods are also related to concepts. As Samaddar argues, “the postcolonial context is a question of method also. Context and method overlap in this case, as context makes a method necessary while through a distinct method the context emerges” (2020, p. 23). In this chapter, we suggest that the method of engagement shapes the

basis of our knowledge systems. Therefore, decolonisation has to start with concrete steps. It is these concrete methodological aspects on which we focus in this paper.

6.3.1 *Academic Networks*

Migration studies is fostered through different forms of networking, both within disciplines and across them, in workshops and conferences, through grants and pre-grant meetings. Not all these are held under the name of migration studies. For instance, over the last years we have seen initiative after initiative which aims to decolonise and decentre but many, even most, of the voices we hear, are populated by those who are the power brokers in these debates. Many of these conversations are located in the global North with all the decentring and decolonising primarily involving a few famous scholars from the global South (Chetty, 2023) who are often racially privileged. There are forms of coloniality within the decolonisation debates too with named speakers rushing to write about decolonisation with no real history of working decolonially. There have even been decolonising grants which network scholars only from the global North, i.e., where due to the funding mechanisms no global South scholars can be paid to participate. How far can you decentre and reconstruct when you are the centre, and your groups are populated by some of the most famous names in academia? These groups often recognise their limitations but their starting point of an existing network of famous names does not really allow them to decentre; at best, it enlarges that centre through inclusion. Such moves by centres like The Global (De)Centre⁴ may be a step forward in the inclusivity agenda but the impossibility of decentring from the centre is something they too have to struggle with.

Importantly, researchers in the global North still very often influence debates, identify and choose core concepts and then apply these to different places including in the global South. Southern partners are folded into grants to test them. The team then gains authority through publications including in special issues of journals where Southern authors may be added as co-authors but the fundamental bases for the concepts can, by then, not be questioned too far. Unfortunately and increasingly, in the interest of gaining funding some of these grants even add methodologies of surveillance such as Artificial Intelligence without reflection on the ethics of collecting and using such data (La Fors & Meissner, 2022) or the coloniality that is reproduced through its use. Others choose to offer training in the global South expressly to slow or deter migration. To use this language and the methods is to play with the devil, to fail to recognise the power of the discourses within which these grants are set and to bolster colonial methods.

We all, including us as the authors of this piece, need to be wary of becoming the flagbearers of decolonisation as we too are steeped in the privileges of our global

⁴<https://globaldecentre.org>

North location. Yet, as racialised scholars we also see that these privileges are contingent, degraded and marked. We too are subject to the power of whiteness in shaping thought.

The circulating value of associations and networks are often garnered through selectivity—by identifying a handful of scholars whose voices one amplifies. However, and importantly, in migration research more than many other fields, those who have felt the brunt of coloniality are already in the global North, in migrant communities and even in the academy. The centre is already decentred, if only one were to look for it. However, there are few attempts to enable ordinary migrants or migrant academics to receive recognition and adequate recompense (Jashari, Chap. 2, this volume). Some of this is due to racial valuation, i.e. “the structural, hierarchical, and socially consequential valuation of racial groups” (Sirleaf, 2021, p. 1826). For Sirleaf, racial valuation as a framework “helps to shift the focus from an absence of discrimination and inequities, to whether there are intentional structures and supports to attain and maintain racially just outcomes through pre-emptive and preventive practices and procedures” (2021, p. 1832). Decolonisation in a society with racial hierarchies requires us to reckon with our own positioning in maintaining these structures and our role in addressing them. As Esson et al. (2017) argue ‘decolonisation light’ does more harm than good. Importantly, racial valuation sidesteps questions of intentionality, the use of stereotypes and bias in shaping discrimination. Instead, it emphasises the consequences of racial valuation and the institutional and individual actions, policies and regulations that have led to these outcomes. It also distributes the responsibility for these outcomes both to individuals and to wider circulations of value (also see Raghuram, 2021). In academia, addressing this requires that we think through the social reproduction of academics and the academy (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2016), and act to change these through situated practice. It requires that we question our own role in excluding racially minoritised scholars and those from the global South, and how we engage in an exclusionary politics of knowledge production under the umbrella of inclusion and also, most crucially to change it.

6.3.2 *Citational Practices*

Citational practices is the area where most changes have been attempted. For instance, an interest in what is missing in Western academic knowledges, attention to unequal internationalisation (Kofman, 2020; Bastia and Kofman, Chap. 7, this volume) and recognition of the need for a more thoughtful and inclusive set of citational practices have been discussed at conferences and workshops.⁵ There is also some recognition that Black, African, Latin American and Asian scholars should be

⁵For example at IMISCOE’s 18th annual conference in 2021 the standing committee Gender and Sexuality in Migration Research organised a series of workshops on decentring gender and migration (see Scuzzarello, 2021).

cited but this is still far from being a common practice. But, often these citations are performative and used to bulk up the bibliography rather than to thoroughly engage with the challenges that work from the global South or from racialised scholars can pose for our received frameworks. They are still analysed through our familiar ways of thinking.

However, most efforts to decolonise are at risk of taking place within unchanged structures. The configurations of knowledge production and circulation advantage white and global North scholars over racialised scholars in the global North and scholars in global South. Working within such unequal structures of knowledge production (which include funding infrastructures) has meant that many global North scholars have built their careers and intellectual authority by drawing on, but not centre-staging the work of scholars from the global South. As citation is a form of academic capital, scholars need to recognise and address other sites of knowledge production which can enrich migration studies and counter its Eurocentrism, but do so in meaningful ways. This is an important step.

6.3.3 Decolonisation and Migration Methodologies

A third strand of work attempting to decolonise migration studies is methodological. Migration scholars have rethought methodological approaches. For instance, at the 2021 IMISCOE annual conference there were many sessions where decolonisation was discussed, mostly in methodological terms and the unequal relations of power between the researcher and researched. This has been done in two ways: reflexive practices and participatory approaches.

6.3.3.1 Reflexivity and Embodied Privilege

Over the past decades there has been an increased vocalisation of the positionality of the researcher. This is particularly evident in conference presentations, such as the IMISCOE 2021 Annual conference, where at least 11 sessions and workshop aligned themselves with decolonial thinking and agendas. In this recent spate of publications on decolonising migration studies white, sometimes male, academics write on decolonisation and in doing so position their race, sexuality and gender (Collins, 2022). However, the next step is also essential, to return to what this implies for the text that follows. The position and privilege of whiteness can otherwise be left unexamined. It can present social locations without going in to interrogate what difference this makes; i.e. self-questioning how white scholars' intersectional entitlements and privileges can impact their research topics and practices. White power located in the global North then becomes complicit in reproducing colonial relations of power within which migration is studied (Lawrence & Dua, 2005) because whiteness is not problematised and nor are the contingencies of whiteness (Baker, 2021). How does this positionality buttress one's position within

academic capitalism? Scholars need to be wary of positioning themselves as speakers on decolonisation, ignoring how “the privilege of whiteness enables them to become global advocates of the South, leading to an ex-nomination of the naturalisation of power and whiteness” (Puwar, 2020, p. 544). Puwar persuasively argues against the “[C]entre-staging of white figures in anti-racist struggles”, a proclivity which must be avoided while decolonising migration studies.

When reflection on positionality does not translate into research practice, i.e. into commensurate action it can simply lead to colonising of decolonisation. This is particularly important because often, white scholars are applauded for their reflexivity, while still being able to maintain an outsider position in their research. By contrast racially minoritised scholars, are expected to perform this reflexivity in their assumed ‘insider’ position role. However, as Maria Lugones asserts, “the ‘outside’ does not point to positioning oneself as an observer. It rather marks a dominant position in the relations of power constituted of oppression” (2003, p. x). Reflexivity and positionality which is untethered by politics of change will simply end up as a tool that reasserts the privileges and entitlements of white scholars and allow them to reconcile any cognitive and epistemic dissonance they might face. Thus, this is not a call to navel-gaze through a superficial engagement with *positionality* but to use these reflections to actually produce a change in research practice, a shift in relations of power. Moreover, this is not just a call to those who write on decolonisation but to all migration scholars who want to have a legacy in migration research.

6.3.3.2 Participatory Methodologies

The uncomfortable position scholars find themselves in as they enter the decolonisation process through reflexivity often leads them toward aspirations of less extractive research methods—such as participatory research methods through community-based research and engagement (See Ponzoni et al., Chap. 3, in this volume). These approaches have garnered increased attention in migration studies (Riaño, 2016; Erel et al., 2017; Mata-Codesal et al., 2020) over the past few years. Participatory research, Mata-Codesal et al. argue is not “only a set of creative methods [...] but also an epistemology and an ethics of research” (2020, p. 202). These methods enable co-creation of knowledge and collaboration between researchers and the community members. And the current turn encourages researchers to frame this approach as decolonisation.

Decolonial scholars too consider participatory action research as a valuable method when adopted by those with long-standing relations and commitments to the groups being studied, as amongst the scholars cited above. Participatory research aims to engage social realities in order to transform them. It is purportedly activist, but has been criticised for being used lightly without any firm commitment or ongoing relations (Maguire, 1987). Without this anchoring, there are limits to participatory methods if they do not address the structural inequalities and the power relations that produce injustice (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). Additionally, participatory approaches are more than methods; they are embedded in an epistemology and

ethics of research (Mata-Codesal et al., 2020) and must therefore avoid the risk of erasure of relations of power embedded in the research categories themselves (Raghuram et al., 2009). There is no guarantee that a community will be the beneficiary of research, or that it is their liberatory struggle with which researchers are engaging. The questions asked are often already set by researchers. For community members who choose to participate, this may potentially lead to an increased burden on the communities to collaborate in research (Tuck & Guishard, 2013). Furthermore, the modes of engagement—inclusive and collaborative work—does not eliminate asymmetrical relations of power and so should be wary of claiming to decolonise.

Moreover, participatory action research also needs to ensure the right to refuse to participate in such projects. Decolonial knowledge through research, art and other modes of knowledge production is premised on refusal as generative—a rejection of thinking within and using white, colonial and settler-colonial scripts that form the academic industrial complex (Simpson, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2014a, 2014b). Migration studies research and researchers need to enable the conditions for ‘refusal’—to participate, and share knowledge on the terms set by researchers (Tuck & Yang, 2014a).

Such refusal may be seen by global North scholars as a community’s lack of interest or passive position to not improve or resolve their problem. Failure to ‘properly decolonise’ by taking on northern decolonisation agendas is the challenge that well-meaning decolonial projects must also face. We cannot define decolonisation or set those agendas.

To balance this extractive relationship, some researchers are trying to further embed themselves in communities. This is extremely risky as it can end up transitioning into a potential auto-ethnographic research project. The principle of reciprocity, to try to give back by volunteering their time to support local initiatives, can go some way towards addressing the extractive nature of data generation and the research process overall. However, reciprocity does not mean decolonisation. The key to decolonisation is to undertake research not on communities but with and in the communities by recognising and reckoning with (Black) power and working in ways that are anticolonial (Tuck & Guishard, 2013). Hence Tuck and Guishard (2013) call for decolonising participatory action research.

Fundamental to this is the issue of data flows, i.e., how data is owned, stored, interpreted and shared. Very often data at the end of a project is removed from the places where it is gathered and more importantly to whom it belongs. It is purposed and shaped for another audience, losing its cultural referents and depth. Moreover, it is not adequately reworked for the audience that matters, i.e. to those whose data has been collected. Data sovereignty—do research participants have a right to the data—is perhaps one of the largest issue we face today (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016).

We, the authors, are also complicit in this failure. Though our motivations are to remedy this complicity, by writing this piece we cannot escape our own location and our structural advantages (and racialised disadvantages). We too are entangled within colonial structures of power which shape the ways we challenge the status quo and so we too end up reproducing the coloniality of knowledge. There is no

innocent ground to stand on. And so, despite the best intentions of the engagements, these entanglements with decolonisation have the unfortunate consequence of devaluing the politics of decolonisation. We hope that the critiques offered above serve as cautions, and reminders of how decolonisation could itself be colonised. In addition to being cautious in how to enter or align with decolonisation, below we offer three moves forward.

6.4 Ways Forward

To decolonise migration studies, it is crucial to go beyond the rhetoric of decentring and demigrantizing and examine the colonial inheritances of concepts that shape migration studies such as gender, class, race and territory to name a few. For instance, a decolonial examination of the relationship between global North and South sovereign nation states is offered by Achiume (2019) laying out the blueprint for *decolonial migration*—one which does not criminalise migrants. The different operations of race, racism and migration have to be central to decolonial thinking (Grosfoguel et al., 2015; Bardhan & Zhang, 2017). Moreover, the small and diminishing space for discussing anti-racism in the context of increasing right-wing movements in many parts of Europe, and the role that such movements play in shaping the discourse of migration studies also need attention (Boulila, 2019). The lack of recognition of colonial inheritances, is, as Appiah and Yeboah Mireku (2020) argue even more dangerous.

But how do we move forward from these critiques into action? While some in migration studies have moved to ‘doing’ decolonisation we need to first recognise the limitations and also dangers of simply claiming decolonisation, i.e., of rhetorical decolonisation. This requires epistemic humility, “an epistemic virtue that requires an agent to be prudent in their claims to knowledge. This prudence implies that the agent, first, admits their limitations, second, restricts their knowledge claims to what falls within these limitations, and third, is open to acquiring new epistemic resources in light of these limitations” (Tobi, 2020, p. 267).

Thus, *first* of the two moves we offer is to *orientate* oneself and admit the limitations of one’s knowledge. Thinking through colonial inheritances requires reflexive moves, something migration studies has long undertaken (Gray, 2008; Schmidt, 2007; Shinozaki, 2012). In fact, it is under the remit of reflexivities, as part of the IMISCOE’s standing committee on ‘Reflexivities in Migration Studies’ that the work to decolonise migration studies has in part been undertaken. Reflection on current location and ways in which one is complicit in producing coloniality provides the first step (but only the first step) to orient oneself. Using Sara Ahmed’s (2006) notion of orientation and reorientation—the ‘starting point’ of orientation is inherited. Reflections on the conditions of emergence—histories and social orientations—and how they shape what we know, recognise and value as knowledge and how we contribute to epistemic colonisation is key to decolonisation.

In these discussions of knowledge, claim-making and space-taking, we must remember that there is a structural base to migration studies—salaries, jobs, opportunities. There is no decolonisation without reflecting on this base and overturning its' permissions and omissions. Who has been permitted to occupy the centre-ground in migration studies and how far are migrants enabled to make careers in this field? What is the role of institutions and networks in facilitating such scholars; but most importantly, what do those writing on decolonisation do to materially support racialised minority scholars? What forms of centring are white scholars engaging in as they occupy decolonisation as a field of study in migration studies? Scholars need to open up jobs and share the political economy of the academy and its goods in and through their research. How has economic power been redistributed in and through publication partnerships? How far do people step back and, sometimes, even step out of publications instead enabling racialised scholars to take up these opportunities? We need to do this at an individual level but also at an institutional level. We need to minimise complicity in reproducing colonial relations of power. This would go some way towards addressing the coloniality of migration studies.

Decolonising migration studies needs voices of migrant scholars; after all, they often broker access to migrant communities that are being researched. They are also in undergraduate and postgraduate classes as they join these, thinking that this is a space where they can reflect on their own experiences. Yet, their knowledges are incorporated but *they* rarely are. If they do get positions, they may be put to work on projects on migration but not adequately recognised or rewarded for their partnership. They are unable to make their knowledge into a career pathway. How many racialised migrant scholars do we see in our migration conferences?

One solution is for all of us to ask ourselves—whose knowledge is this research based on and who should therefore represent that knowledge? Should we be the ones authoring this piece? Are there others who are actively working on these issues who need to occupy these speaking positions? Making space for those voices—directing invitations and opportunities to talk about the research to those scholars has to be fundamental to any decolonisation. But this does not mean just vacating the land. It means staying in the field and enabling—supporting migrant racialised academics or those from the global South to write papers and give conference presentations. This means accepting invitations you get through your contacts, then facilitating minoritised partners to take the stage while you stay in the background. Elevate those voices and not yours. And if you want to be recognised for your support and work, then strive to be included as a second or third author. If possible, aim to be in the acknowledgement of the author rather than anti-acknowledgements—to be recognised for how you supported and enabled the author rather than for how you impeded their progress.

Hence decolonising from the centre of former colonies requires us to recognise the histories, boundaries, and limitations of one's epistemic centres. Here it is important to reiterate that colonisation was varied, and that Europeans benefited from the white supremacist thinking that underpinned colonial conquests even when they were not direct colonisers. All countries and regions did not benefit in the same way or equally, but the power of whiteness was sedimented through colonisation

and all white Europeans have benefited and continue to benefit from this. The histories and boundaries of the episteme are therefore more complicated than through a narrow interpretation of colonialism. Within this context, decolonisation requires comparison, and learning, unlearning and re-learning. It also entails recognising other knowledges and learning those. However, being reflexive in one's complicity to coloniality without reorientation can lead to navel-gazing. This means that it isn't sufficient to simply cite scholars from the global South, but to learn from them, and use the knowledge. But this is no easy task. As de Sousa Santos points out, "[...] after five centuries of 'teaching' the world, the global North seems to have lost the capacity to learn from the experiences of the world. In other words, it looks as if colonialism has disabled the global North from learning in noncolonial terms, that is, in terms that allow for the existence of histories other than the universal history of the West." (De Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 19). How do we offer our knowledges up for remaking and reshaping? How do we learn to accept the insecurities that this vacating may cause and recognise this as an everyday experience for racialised minorities? How do we use that to rethink our own anticolonial and antiracist agendas, engagements, writings, and wider engagements?

The *second* move is *reorientation*—recognising the existence of multiple histories, ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and methods and upending the coloniality of migration research. It involves learning from and thinking of how existing concepts such as sovereignty, citizenship, borders, nation-states, gender, race etc. are being theorised and critiqued within fields such as settler-colonial studies, Indigenous studies, and decolonial studies. And to do this by acknowledging diverse knowledges and taking care to not appropriate or make invisible these knowledges. This requires open and reflexive engagement especially by non-Indigenous scholars. Some non-Indigenous scholars have been considerably engaging with Indigenous knowledges to understand migration and migrant experiences in conversation with critical race theory (Jean-Charles, 2021), Dalit studies (Upadhyay, 2013, 2019), and queer diasporic studies (Bakshi, 2020) to name a few. And even these entanglements are open for critique such as those offered by Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (2005) who examine decolonising anti-racism, or Nikki Moodie (2018). They build on and extend the work of Brayboy (2005) which calls for decolonising critical race theory. These fields of knowledge also provide different methodological approaches which can offer new points of entry into framing questions and understanding migration. In short, don't just cite the work, but use it thoughtfully without appropriating it. And recognise that underpinning much of this work is a history of long engagement with race and coloniality.

Decolonising migration studies does not mean emptying white scholars in their entirety (Emejulu, 2019) from our reading lists. Rather, decolonisation involves considering their writings with their lived politics. What is required is "an honest consideration as to why white men dominate reading lists and the implications this has for which groups get to enjoy the status of a knowing agent. Furthermore, the deceptively simple act of 'adding different voices' to a given reading list does not sufficiently address the problem" (Emejulu, 2019, p. 204).

Moving from reflexivities to re-orientation toward decolonisation must also involve decolonising one's participation in knowledge-making. One cannot decolonise others; that would, in effect, mean colonising decolonisation. We, the authors, also need to reflect more on the ways we are complicit in reproducing coloniality, and this paper has been a step toward our orientation and reorientation process.

We want to end with this call from Amílcar Cabral, the Bissau-Guinean and Cape Verdean freedom fighter, who wrote extensively on anticolonialism. His call is particularly relevant to those who are working on decolonising migration:

Every responsible member must have the courage of his [sic] responsibilities, exacting from others a proper respect for his work and properly respecting the work of others. Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories ... (Cabral, 1973, p. 71)

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Chapter 7

Unequal Knowledge Production and Circulation in Migration Studies: Feminist Perspectives



Tanja Bastia and Eleonore Kofman

7.1 Introduction

Knowledge production and knowledge circulation within the broader field of migration studies are highly unequal as illustrated by two recently published articles (Levy et al., 2020; Pisarevskaya et al., 2020). These two articles mapped the academic landscape of more than 30 years of migration studies as an epistemic community and its internationalisation through a bibliometric analysis of journal articles and books, tracing the changes over time and the extent to which authors refer to or cite one another. The results demonstrated that whilst the volume of studies in the field of migration grew very rapidly after 2000, its internationalisation only increased slowly and that “English became the lingua-franca for academic research on migration in a rather organic manner” (Pisarevskaya et al., 2020). Both because of the language restriction of the algorithm to the English language (see Schmall, Chap. 8, this volume) and because of the Global North’s dominance in the field, there is likely to be an under-representation of scholarship from the Global South.¹ Other reviews of major names in migration studies (Carling, 2015) or of places of authors in a leading journal, such as the review in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration*

¹Although it has become common to speak of the Global North versus a Global South, we wish to highlight the heterogeneity of both of these broad categories in terms of economic levels, migration patterns and regimes, cultural practices, gender regimes and relationships to colonialism.

T. Bastia (✉)
University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
e-mail: Tanja.Bastia@manchester.ac.uk

E. Kofman
Middlesex University, London, UK
e-mail: E.Kofman@mdx.ac.uk

Studies (King et al., 2011), also revealed a restricted number of countries of recognised scholars.

With the increasing attention being paid to the significance of colonialism and the call to decolonise the curriculum, including in migration studies (Tudor, 2018; Mayblin & Turner, 2021; see Sondhi and Raghuram, Chap. 6, this volume), some scholars have posed questions about the geopolitics of knowledge production beyond the centres of knowledge production in migration studies, what decolonising means and how we might re-center the South (Halvorsen, 2018; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020). Others have highlighted the marginalisation of important theoretical and empirical research from non-western regions (Asis et al., 2019; Chan, 2020). Many of these critical studies have highlighted the power relations underpinning the relegation of the South to the production of data and the marginalisation of Southern theory in the geopolitics of knowledge production and citation (Connell, 2014a, b). In this chapter, we address the uneven (e)valuation of knowledge, which is related both to how knowledge is produced as well as how it circulates, the two aspects being closely related. We seek to probe more deeply into the institutional dimensions of the uneven production and circulation of knowledge, and in particular, the ability to conduct research and its funding, the hegemony of English and its implications for research and teaching, and some reflections on how we might effectively challenge it within the context of academic reflexivity in the field of migration studies (see Dieterich and Nieswand, Chap. 5, this volume). This requires an awareness of the challenges and need for thinking with care in critiquing knowledge production of other researchers in our field (see Bartels et al., Chap. 4, this volume). In doing so we thus acknowledge that our position is privileged, and that unlike many others, we are relatively well placed in the knowledge hierarchy and the academic labor market where a growing number of academics and researchers confront precarious conditions (see Bartels et al., Chap. 4, this volume, and Hernández-Albújar and Konyali, Chap. 16, this volume).

We illustrate these problems by drawing on our own engagement with research on gender and migration, as well as a broader reflection on how gender and migration research produced in East Asia, Latin America and Western Europe is taken into account (or not) in some of the key gender and migration discussions. We discuss what we believe are some of the reasons behind the unequal production and circulation of knowledge within gender and migration and provide examples of different ways in which some of the key concepts used extensively in the gender and migration literature, such as gender, care or the family, have different meanings in different contexts. We also suggest that decolonial (Lugones, 2010; Falquet & Flores Espínola, 2019) and Southern knowledge (Connell, 2014a, b) perspectives in knowledge production and circulation might help build a more level playing field, though we suggest that real change is unlikely to come about only as a result of new or different knowledge production and suggest that strategic alliances and institutional change are both needed for change to take place. To do this, we reflect on the role that feminist theory has played in shaping this field, acknowledging its contributions but also the fact that it suffers from the same weaknesses as migration

studies itself: it is largely Eurocentric, disregards the rich contributions from Africa, Asia and Latin America, and is yet to fully integrate a decolonial definition of itself.

We then move to discuss decolonial perspectives more broadly and include a reflection of how this perspective might both broaden the field of gender and migration as well as contribute to building more equal knowledge production practices. Following Rivera Cusicanqui (2012), a decolonial perspective would include not just knowledge production but also active engagement with migrant women's networks and action to improve the substantive conditions of women migrants. A decolonial perspective would also shift our curriculum to include non-academic work, art and other interventions. Finally, it would also embed a higher degree of reflexivity in relation to both our positionality as well as how our research contributes towards challenging existing intersectional inequalities or, rather, their reproduction.

7.2 Unequal Knowledge Production

We recognise that the politics of knowledge production is highly unequal and has privileged the issues raised in the core countries of the Global North, especially in the past two decades as the focus has shifted to receiving countries where migration research has massively expanded, especially in Europe. For example, in the initial period of studies on gender and migration in the 1980s and 1990s, in some reviews of the emerging field, different regions were given relatively equal status (Willis & Yeoh, 2000). Theoretical perspectives, such as social reproduction and labour migrations in South East Asia (Truong, 1996) or structuration perspectives in Southern Africa (Wright, 1995), were also seen to draw upon migrations in regions beyond Europe and North America. Latin America, with a majority of female migrants, produced a notable literature, often in Spanish, emphasising the diversity of contexts and types of rural-urban, regional and international migrations (Staab, 2004; Cerrutti & Parrado, 2015; Cerrutti, 2017). With the expansion of labour migration, especially in female-dominated sectors in the wealthy regions of the Global North, migration studies tended to focus on South to North migrations. So too did theorisations of the transfer of labour emphasise its international dimension (Hochschild, 2001; Sassen, 2000) and reinforce the preoccupation with the implications for the Global North (Kofman, 2014) with lesser attention paid to concerns or contexts that continued to orient migrations flows within the diverse regions of the Global South.

We start with the example of internal migration, which in the North has been largely consigned to the past, while in many societies in the South, it remained at the end of the twentieth century a significant vector of labour migration (Bunster & Chaney, 1985; Chant, 1992) and continues to be pertinent today (more so in Africa and parts of Asia than in Latin America). Migration in the context of urbanisation remains particularly important in countries such as China, with 286 million rural workers in cities in 2020. It is particularly significant since the right to the city (including the right to work and entitlements to pensions, housing, medical care and

so on) is denied to rural migrant workers, who do not benefit from the formal resources of the city as a result of the application of the household registration system (*hukou*) though this has been relaxed in recent years (Kofman et al., 2021). Internal and international migration, however, are generally treated as two separate and disconnected literatures with internal migration often neglected due to its seeming irrelevance for the North (King & Skeldon, 2010). Thus, the complexities and articulations between different types of migration are often omitted in Africa and Latin America, where multi-scalar migrations comprising rural-urban, cross-border to neighbouring countries and longer-distance international migrations co-exist (Bastia, 2019).

While in many European countries, domestic and care work has been represented as international migrants' work, this is a simplification because it overlooks the diversities of labour markets and prioritises the metropolitan (see Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2009). Even in many wealthy countries, such as France and UK, the use of migrant labour is highly uneven with many working class women undertaking these jobs in poorer regions (Howard & Kofman, 2020) and for domestic work and certain kinds of care (Avril & Cartier, 2014). In many countries of the Global South, these jobs are usually taken up by internal migrants who often work informally. In Brazil, the country with the largest number of domestic workers with ten million households employing domestic workers and six million employed as domestic workers, many are internal migrants. The gendered and racial composition of domestic workers reflects the country's colonial history and slavery, as it does in Colombia (Marchetti et al., 2021). In Brazil, 60% of domestic workers are Black (Acciari, 2019). In India too, the country with the second largest number of domestic workers, urban middle class and elite families draw on those from rural areas (Palriwala & Neetha, 2011). The vast majority of domestic workers are first generation rural migrants. Indeed international migrants may be placed at the top of a stratified system of (migrant) domestic and care work, given that those in Singapore, Hong Kong or the Gulf Cooperation countries actually receive a contract and payment in foreign currency, which is more valued than the national currency. Domestic workers working in their own countries, on the other hand, are paid in the national currency and often work informally, without labour contracts. This is the case especially where migrant domestic workers do not dominate the sector, as in Pakistan, and local workers provide the bulk of labour, unlike for example in the Gulf countries or South East Asia.

An extensive theoretical and empirical literature has emerged around the circulation and transfer of care labour between the South and the North (Hochschild, 2001; Parreñas, 2001; Lutz & Palenga-Möllnbeck, 2012). However, as Raghuram (2012) has noted, care is adopted somewhat unquestioningly as the lens through which to make sense of the social reproduction of households, communities and economies in different, even dissimilar, parts of the world. Such an approach does not reflect adequately on what might be locationally specific about care in diverse geographical contexts. As noted, the analysis of the transfer of care labour globally tended initially to focus on the Global North, although more recent studies of the transfer,

circulation and transnationalisation of care activities and practices have begun to take into account the implications for countries of origin (Williams, 2018).

These earlier studies of sending societies assumed that care activities had to be redistributed amongst nuclear families (Raghuram, 2012), but comparative studies of transnational families have recognised the diversity of family forms and the relationships between family members and wider kin (Mazzucato & Dito, 2018). Extended families may be common in many countries, for example, in India about a fifth are composed of more than two married adults (Palriwala & Neetha, 2011). In Andean countries, it is common to have extended ‘fictive kin’ family members (Gray-Molina et al., 1999; Van Vleet, 2008). At the same time the broader context in which families operate may not be acknowledged, thereby marginalising the ways in which families relate to a wider institutional set of actors and where care is framed and mobilised under specific normative contexts in different countries (Mazzucato & Dito, 2018; Williams, 2010).

Much of the existing literature on international migration and care sometimes also places too much emphasis on the international move as the originator of care reorganisation in families and communities of origin, without acknowledging that migration itself is part of broader processes of change. The reorganisation of family forms often pre-dates the international move and may have been common as a strategy, particularly in lower-income families, where the main carer migrated internally or just sought work locally and had to rely on her extended family, usually the maternal grandmother, for raising young children and taking care of cooking and cleaning (Bastia, 2019). In the Latin American context, the reorganisation of care in communities of origin is not necessarily seen as a ‘burden’ or as ‘care loss’, because care arrangements have always been much more fluid and responsive, than is acknowledged in some of the literature on global care chains, for example (Herrera, 2020).

Although thus far we have discussed differences in how international migration is viewed in relation to other forms of migration and its place as a catalyst of family restructuring and the reorganisation of care in places of origin, we also wanted to draw attention to a more fundamental tension in some of the key concepts used in the literature on gender and migration.

In the English-speaking literature, the commonly accepted definition of gender refers to the socially constructed difference between men and women. It is a concept that is always relational, with gender *relations*, referring to the (usually unequal) power relations between men and women, and gender *roles*, as the different activities that men and women carry out. Gender *ideology*, on the other hand, refers to the broader ideas that define gender norms and what it means to be a woman or a man in a given context.

Already within Europe itself, there are tensions related to some of the basic concepts used in feminist theory. Blidon for example, in relation to her discussion of the reception of the concept of intersectionality in French feminist circles, refers to the rejection by French feminists of the concepts of gender and gender roles, and their

preference for the use of sex and “social sexual relations” (Blidon, 2018, p. 592). She explains that:

Feminist materialist scholars like the sociologist Christine Delphy or the anthropologist Nicole Claude Mathieu, deemed that the scope of the notion of gender was depoliticized with respect to more radical and critical notions of *sex class* (*classe de sexe* in French), *sex-ing* (*sexage*) or *social sexual relations* (*relations sociales de sexe*). Gender, as a concept, thus had difficult beginnings in French geography, and researchers who wanted to work in this area had to struggle to impart its legitimacy and relevance to their colleagues. Gender geography has since developed but remains confined to a group of specialists without being fully integrated into the social or human geography; it is the same in social sciences. (Blidon, 2018, p. 592)

Clearly, with Europe being a multi-lingual and multi-cultural region, there are many other tensions and different understandings of both gender and intersectionality, that we do not have the space to explore further. If we expand our view to Africa and the Americas, the tensions become even more obvious. For example, Ifi Amadiume already in 1987 made the point that notions of gender were very different in Africa before colonialism. In her book, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* she argued that colonial powers imposed a dichotomous notion of female and male, as we know of today, over a much more fluid system of identities in which roles were not so rigidly tied to women or men (Amadiume, 1987). Walter L. Williams (1992) made a very similar point regarding Native American indigenous groups, in which gender identity also included a third gender, the ‘two spirit person’, who had both feminine and masculine attributes and identified with both and neither at the same time (Williams, 1992). Further South in the Americas, Silverblatt (1985) showed that gender relations were complementary and more equitable before colonisation. This is a debate that continues to this day between anthropologists wishing to recognise the complementarity of gender relations in current Andean indigenous communities, which stems from indigenous cosmologies that go beyond the human and include the natural world, and Western feminist framings of the same relations as being unequal (Pape, 2008; Burman, 2011). Radcliffe with Pequeño (2010) have written how the lack of an intersectional perspective in both gender and development programmes and ethnodevelopment policies continue to disadvantage indigenous women.

Yet, despite this diversity and disagreements in our understanding of the very basic concepts we use in the feminist literature on migration, most of the English-speaking (and much of the literature in other languages), and here we include our own work, continues to be based on dichotomous understandings of gender as relating to men and women, albeit with some but limited acknowledgement of diverse sexual orientations and the implications of these, as well as sexuality itself, for migration (Manalansan, 2006; Cantú, 2009; Carrillo, 2018).

Intersectionality is now viewed as a major contribution of feminist theory and widely used in gender and migration analyses. Intersectionality has travelled (Davis, 2020), interacted and been adopted in distinct ways (Amelina & Lutz, 2019). Within the US itself, black women active in the civil rights movement were already making intersectional-like arguments in the nineteenth century (e.g. Cooper 1886 cited in

Eaves & Al-Hindi, 2020). Although it was Crenshaw (1989, 1991) who coined the term, other Black and anti-racist feminists also laid the groundwork earlier (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Glenn, 1985; see Bastia et al., 2022 for a fuller discussion). In France, for example, the analysis of the relationship of sexism and racism has a history going back to the 1970s within a materialist feminist approach (Guillaumin, 1992/1995), which has been translated into English but largely ignored.

In feminist geography, a number of publications put forward arguments for greater attention needed on the intersections of gender and race inequalities (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996; Ruddick, 1996). Around the same time, Alison MacEwan Scott also published her monograph on *Divisions and Solidarities: Gender, Class and Employment in Latin America* (1994). It is interesting, therefore, that while many authors had been making similar arguments around the same time, the idea of intersectionality really took off only after about a decade after it was given a name by Crenshaw.

Whilst the term intersectionality may not be used so commonly in countries in the South, and especially not by women's organisations, this does not mean that multiple systems of oppression experienced by migrant women are not discussed (Marchetti et al., 2021). As Marchetti et al. (2021, p. 9) argue, migrant women's organisations raise such problems that they encounter by invoking the concept as a 'form of critical praxis' and consciousness without necessarily using the term.

As we have highlighted, the dominant literature on gender and migration, i.e. that which is published in English, often lacks awareness of different traditions, such as the Latin American, largely published in Spanish. For example, the Argentinean sociologist Ana Inés Mallimaci (2009) argued over 10 years ago that most scholarship on gender and migration in the Latin American region uses concepts derived from women's migration as it was experienced in Europe and the US. In her view, this literature does not reflect the experiences of women in Latin American regional migration, where migration is usually seen as more related to the family, that is, undertaken by women within the context of family-wide strategies and not necessarily individually or for gaining greater autonomy. Such a framing could be read as non- or anti-feminist. However, more fundamentally it relates to the tension between a more liberal feminist view of women's migration, in which migration is seen as potentially emancipatory, freeing and liberating; versus a more communitarian view of women's interests, which are sometimes better looked after in family settings; although some, such as Morokvasic (2007) have also highlighted the complex relationships between exploitation and emancipation (see also Tyldum, 2015).

7.3 Undertaking Research

The ability to carry out research depends on institutional funding as well as the type of incentives that researchers need to negotiate within a context where the global hierarchy of higher education and geographical distribution of resources are

concentrated in the North (King et al., 2011), especially Western Europe, the United States, Australia and East Asia (see QS Ranking of Universities). Prestigious institutions in these countries attract research funding and international PhD students, enable staff to pursue research as part of their employment, and generate high levels of citations of staff. In some countries, there are consistent and stable avenues that support research engagement and provide academics with support/resources for protecting their research time. In other countries, however, such institutional and/or core funding does not exist so academic staff at university have to be heavily involved in either teaching or consultancy work (which might be research-based, but is by definition more short-term and defined by the interests of the funders), often preferably both.

Another key issue is that English dominates recognised knowledge production in migration studies, as the mapping mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, indicates. In most disciplines (in the UK), there is no requirement to speak the ‘local’ language and most English speakers work with translators. This leads to only partial engagements not just with ‘informants’ and research participants but also local research institutions and the wider community. The domination of the English language also leads to partial reviews of the existing literature. For example, Jorgen Carling (2015) in his listing of the most significant migration scholars, relied exclusively on 8 English-language journals so it is not surprising that its 107 names are dominated by the US (31), UK (23) and Australia (9). The 107 people listed here have all published at least 5 articles in the leading migration journals over the past 20 years (1995–2014). Their articles have appeared in at least two of the journals, and at least one of their articles has been published during the past decade. No scholars are cited from Africa or Latin America. There is also no reference to journals published in other major languages, such as the *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, *Migrations et Sociétés*, founded in France in 1985 and 1989 respectively, and *Hommes et Migrations* with even a longer history going back to the 1950s at a time of North African immigration to the country. It adopted its present name in 1965. And unsurprisingly no French scholars are named despite the country’s long tradition of migration studies (see Schmoll, Chap. 8, this volume), impact on Francophone scholars in Africa and Canada and connections with a number of Latin American countries, which have led to dialogues around concepts of intersectionality and decolonial feminism (Falquet & Flores Espínola, 2019).

While the call to ‘decolonise’ knowledge production, including migration studies, is appealing, we should recognise that it also means different things to different people. To truly decolonise knowledge production, there needs to be a systemic change in power relations so that those that have thus far been marginalised and oppressed—colonised—can speak/write for themselves. There are inherent ethical and political problems in ‘speaking for’ others (Spivak, 1988). So this is not what we set out to do. Our approach to decolonising gender and migration studies begins with paying greater attention to how knowledge is produced, which knowledge is taken into account/read/cited/listened to, with the aim of beginning a critical discussion about these questions. Hand in hand, goes a wish to also begin to open up spaces for critical engagements, strategic solidarities and more horizontal

engagements within the field of migration studies; as well as creating new and different opportunities by giving up the spaces that we might be taking up (see Raghuram and Sondhi, Chap. 6, this volume).

Intellectually, we take this call as an invitation to pay greater attention to the key concepts we use in our research and writing, and how and whether these concepts might resonate in other regions of the world and to be attentive to theoretical and political developments in other contexts not just in the Global South but other regions, such as East/South-East Asia, whose voices and contributions are not adequately recognised (Asis et al., 2019; Yeoh, 2014). This was our aim in relation to intersectionality, for example, to provide a more complex history and genealogy of the term, including a recognition of the key role that social movements—feminist, grassroots women's, anti-racist etc.—have played in creating the ideas that then led to the coining of the term (see also Bastia et al., 2022; see Dietrich and Nieswand on intersectional reflexivity, Chap. 5, this volume).

In terms of research practice, we have explored this through two UK Research Initiatives projects we are each working on, the South-South migration and the Gender, Justice and Security Hubs (<https://thegenderhub.com> and <https://www.mideq.org/en>). We collaborated with a range of countries in terms of their wealth, research infrastructure and relationship with Western theory. In the South-South migration hub, Tanja co-leads the Work Package on gender inequalities. She has been working with the other co-leads as well as colleagues from the country corridors (China-Ghana, Haiti-Brazil and Nepal-Malaysia) since the inception of the project, exploring whether the concept of intersectionality resonates in the contexts in which her colleagues are carrying out their research. While the concept is indeed appealing to colleagues in most contexts, the uptake is not straightforward, including because it is difficult to find a direct translation of some of the underlying concepts embedded within intersectionality (e.g. race in Mandarin); while issues of sexuality were seldom addressed in the literature on South-South migration (Izaguirre & Walsham, 2021).

Overall, there has been relatively little reflection on the implications of Anglo linguistic hegemony for intellectual agendas and traditions in migration studies. And, as we have noted, this is not just an issue of colonial legacies. In contrast, the dominance of English in the production and circulation of knowledge was problematised by scholars of gender and geography following concerns raised in the 1990s about the different interests and access to prestigious journals between those from the Global North and the South.² Maria Dolors Garcia-Ramon (2003), who was active in the Gender and Geography Commission at the time, commented that:

The growing hegemony of English as a global language privileges the geographical discourse of the Anglophone world. Linguistic hegemony is a form of power that empowers some while disempowering others ... that for those writing and speaking in languages other than English, access to a wider audience is much more restricted... access to these journals

²Eleonore Kofman's background discipline is geography. Eleonore was an original member of the Geography and Gender Commission from 1992 as the UK representative.

means power to set the guidelines of the intellectual debate in geography in many regions of the world.

She also concluded by asking how one might engage and overcome the closures produced by the hegemonic power of English?

Scholars in institutions in non-Anglophone countries may be strongly encouraged to teach and publish in English under the pressure to internationalise academic research. For example, as Sirijit Sunanta (Mahidol University, Thailand), a researcher on gender and migration at a Thai university, stated in the GeNSeM IMISCOE dialogue in 2021, the medium of writing and teaching is mostly in English. As a result, students are largely given materials to read in English, even when the topic is focused on Thailand and carried out by people proficient in the Thai language. This may negatively affect the development of the nationally located knowledge communities. In her intervention at a recent migration conference, she further emphasised how the field of gender studies could have been further developed in Thailand. The availability of more material in Thai language would benefit Thai scholars, especially graduate students and early-career researchers. Currently, gender concepts from the North are used to teach Thai students, although the contexts in which they are developed are very different. The knowledge of Thai gender concepts, on the other hand, is rather limited and conceptualised often by non-Thai anthropologists who study Thai society. The undesired effect of privileging English is to obscure existing research which, because of the language in which it is presented, is not sufficiently acknowledged in international academic communities with relatively greater access to social and economic capital.

While writing and presenting in English is seen as an advantage as it provides opportunities for participating at international conferences, in some countries there may be considerable pressure to do so. However, it poses obvious problems for scholars who may not have been trained in an Anglophone country. It can create a two-tier system for those who have studied abroad and who have written in English and those who undertook their PhD in their native language, as noted by Masako Kudo (Rikkyo University Tokyo, Japan), another participant in the GeNSeM IMISCOE dialogue. In the case of Japan with a large population and numerous universities, unlike in many other countries, there are a substantial literature and publishing outlets in the native language. Furthermore, writing and presenting in English does not come easy to somebody who generally works in another language. This is not just about the language *per se*, but also about the different ways in which arguments are presented and developed and how articles are structured in different ways in different languages.

7.4 Unequal Knowledge Circulation

Migration studies is further distorted by the very unequal way in which knowledge circulates. As we have highlighted, many concepts have emanated from different linguistic zones and intellectual traditions but while concepts in English travel, they

do not do so in the opposite direction. Drawing on developments in post-wall Europe and a critique of the concept of transnationalism that had become popular in Anglo settler societies in the 1990s, Morokvasic et al. (2003) argued that many of those moving from Eastern and Central Europe could be better captured through notions of circulation reflecting the changing realities of the European migratory landscape. The focus on the durability and sustainability of transnationalism, even if as permanent temporariness, could not deal with the more ephemeral and constant mobilities of those who settle in mobility. While EU enlargement in 2004 would have reduced short-term cross-border movements, it has not dismantled them, especially in relation to female care workers in Austria and Germany who constantly circulate between countries. As Morokvasic comments, notions of circulation evoked by Tarrus (1992) in France, were immobilised by language barriers. However, she also notes that it is not language alone that matters, since discussions have also been ignored even when published in English. In fact, many leading French journals have come to publish articles in English and have translated whole issues into English, including those on gender and migration (Borgeaud-Garciandfa & Georges, 2014).

Language, prestige and citation practices are quite distinct processes, albeit interlinked in who gets cited and which research is deemed 'world class'. Many English-speaking universities actively dis-incentivise publications in languages other than English, because Anglo-American journals are considered the top journals to publish in (disciplines such as anthropology or area studies might be an exception to this) (Carling, 2015). As a result, in some countries there exists a two-tiered system in which those who have studied abroad are privileged in responding to the intellectual requirements of publishing in such journals. This includes presenting a coherent and logical argument in a specific way, within a particular sequence, that is largely determined by how this is done in the English language, with little recognition that thought and argument are structured differently in different languages and national contexts. Language is only part of the problem, however, given that even when research is published in English, it might not be cited, because it is not published in a 'top journal' or because the author does not come from a 'top institution'. In some regions of the South, such as India, there is substantial publishing in English (LIDC Migration Leadership Team, 2018).

Clearly, labels such as the 'Global South' cease to be useful in this context, given significant intra-regional differences. A number of upper middle-income countries, such as Turkey (İçduygu & Aksel, 2012; Eren Benlisoy & Tuncer, 2020; Williams et al., 2020) and Argentina (Cerrutti, 2017), have also attracted large numbers of migrants from neighbouring countries. In the past 20 years, Turkey has evolved from a country of emigration to one of transit and settlement, including some from wealthier countries in Europe and North America (Kofman & Tuncer, 2021; Tuncer & Eren-Benlisoy, 2021) who are often escaping precarious employment, financial insecurity or lack of opportunities in the North and seek to achieve social mobility following their migration. Hayes and Perez-Ganán (2017) have termed this process geographic arbitrage or the use of North-South migration as a cross-border social maintenance or advancement strategy.

These upper middle-income countries now have highly developed research institutes and research councils (CONICET in Argentina and Tubitak in Turkey) with notable migration research compared to poorer countries such as Bolivia. This leads to a very unequal field in which some researchers are able to have dedicated time, like the authors do, to focus on writing projects, while others need to engage in significant teaching loads and consultancies in order to support themselves and carry out research either in their ‘spare time’ or through short-term consultancies. Bolivia is an interesting example of a country where migration research has been supported through the PIEB Strategic Research Programme of Bolivia, funded through the Netherlands’ cooperation, and which produced a significant number of publications on Bolivian migrations throughout the 2000s (de la Torre, 2006; Hinojosa Gordonava, 2009a, b; Roncken et al., 2009, among others). However, while the outputs were prolific, there was no way of sustaining this level of research production, despite the continued importance of international migrations for Bolivia.

The flow of funding shapes both production and circulation. Existing funding sources as well as logistical frameworks tend to give preference to South-North collaborations. In her intervention at the GeNSeM session at the IMISCOE conference in 2021, the Ecuadorean sociologist Gioconda Herrera, highlighted how existing funding sources as well as logistical frameworks, tend to give preference to South-North collaborations. Northern institutions have greater access to funding for conferences and workshops, so they tend to initiate invitations to events for scholars based in the Global South. Such funding is generally lacking in Latin America, where, in addition, intra-regional travel is expensive and often prohibitive, while distances are significant. This leads to a situation where even when there is a will and interest to initiate regional, South-South collaborations, there is little or no funding available, thereby limiting knowledge circulating and being created regionally.

7.5 Publishing

The issue of publishing is crucial when talking about uneven knowledge circulation. As we have noted, Northern institutions put so much emphasis on top journals (which by definition, are those, which are published in the English language), discourage co-production and lead to more extractive forms of knowledge production. Early career scholars are particularly vulnerable to having to make choices about which language and where to publish their research, giving preference to English language journals, even when this means that those who participated in the research will not be able to read its key findings. The favouring of top-ranked, Anglophone journals among academics (especially in the Global North), has clear implications for which empirical research is visible. As these metrics are adopted more widely now, giving preference to English-language journals reproduces the systemic inequalities we have highlighted above. As soon as such metrics and requirements to publish in English are introduced, this devalues any knowledge that is

disseminated in the local or national language. While such a strategy might make it more widely accessible, it also cements a system in which English language dominates, and as a result, so does knowledge produced in the centres in which the language is spoken and written.

The bulk of the literature on gender and migration³ focuses on South-North or peripheral North (e.g. East-West Europe) migration flows. In doing so, it omits the complexities and articulations between different types of migration where multi-scalar migrations comprising rural-urban, cross-border to neighbouring countries and longer-distance international migrations co-exist. The pressure to publish in top-ranked international journals has further implications for knowledge circulation. The costs to publish in Open Access and to access articles, which are behind pay-walls, are prohibitive for scholars based in low- and middle-income countries. These fees further hamper a more equitable knowledge circulation, to the advantage of a few number of institutions. In trying to respond to the challenge of publishing, it is important to consider alternative research outlets, which might enable scholars to share knowledge more widely. Possible strategies include bilingual co-writing practices, bilingual publishing, organising multilingual conferences, negotiating retaining translation rights with publishers, and the importance of publishing in open access formats (GeNSeM IMISCOE blog, see <https://www.imiscoe.org/research/standing-committees/gender-and-sexuality-in-migration-research>).

7.6 Conclusion

In recent years, there has been growing discussion about valuing the knowledge produced in countries of the Global South and decolonising that emanating from the Global North. In this chapter we have taken one of the newer epistemic communities within migration studies, that of gender and migration, to explore issues of knowledge production and circulation within what is clearly a very uneven internationalisation of the field. Indeed, we would argue that in the past two decades gender and migration has become more focussed on theoretical and empirical developments in a small number of receiving countries without adequately considering the variations in meanings of key concepts and range of mobilities. Moreover, it is not just Southern knowledge, which sits at the margins but also non-Western studies that are often not adequately recognised. In this process, English has become the hegemonic language of publication, circulation and valuation of knowledge.

So what steps might we take to mitigate the prevailing power relations privileging theoretical developments in the Global North and the hegemony of English as

³Pisarevskaya et al. (2020) do not go into publishing patterns of particular topic clusters where gender is coupled with family. To our knowledge the patterns for gender and migration are similar to those applicable to migration studies more generally except for the fact that publications extend to feminist journals such as *Gender, Place and Culture*, *Gender and Society*, *Social Politics* and *Women's Studies International Forum*.

the language of production and circulation of knowledge? Discussions of decolonial and intersectional analyses highlight inequalities in knowledge production but on their own will be unable to shift this imbalance. We also need to develop solidarities between academics and activists to decolonise knowledge production and make it relevant to those pushing for progressive social demands. Some steps towards reducing inequality in the circulation of production knowledge and allowing voices to be heard are more easily achievable through targeted initiatives. For example, we need to reflect on how we engage in academic production, including across language barriers, with researchers in different regions to discuss more openly issues of collaboration. We should work with our international professional organisations, such as IMISCOE, to give a diversity of scholars the opportunity to present in high profile spaces, such as plenaries, to express their perspectives. It may well require more resources being devoted to interpreting and translation to capture the richness of theoretical insights and empirical research. Too often associations only present publications in English when members might well be interested in knowing about a wider range of output and possibly reading them. In our involvement with journals, we could also solicit articles from around the world. However, addressing more broadly the hegemony of English is far more intractable and difficult since, as we have highlighted, the direction of travel has been to reinforce its position through international academic networks and national institutions encouraging and favouring its use in the insertion of students and scholars into an international terrain.

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Chapter 8

Linguistic Hegemony, Marginalization, and Migration Scholarship. A View from the Francophone World



Camille Schmoll

Thinking in terms of reflexivity within migration studies may correspond to a variety of approaches and postures: reflexivity may refer to our capacity to reflect upon our positionality in the field—i.e. our relations with informants and colleagues for instance; alternatively, it may refer to the way we use more equalitarian or ethical methods or categories when conducting fieldwork and when interpreting our data; it may also be critically thinking how, as scholars, we deal with public issues and debates, including how we deal and cope with other protagonists of the public debate, such as policy makers, artists and activists for instance. Reflexivity can help us to critically think about our own scientific categories, the way they conflict or conflate with vernacular categories and the way they impact the debate on migration policy and politics.

Another channel to bring about more reflexivity within migration scholarship may be to reflect on power relations within the academic world and the way research on migration is structured by multiple forms of inequalities. In fact, although migration scholars very often think and write about power and inequalities, they rarely discuss and acknowledge power relations and inequalities within their own

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C. Schmoll (✉)

 cole des Hautes  tudes en Sciences Sociales/Research centre G ographie-cit es,
Paris, France

Institut Convergence Migrations, CNRS, Paris, France

e-mail: camille.schmoll@ehess.fr

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academic practices. More reflexivity is thus needed on how knowledge is produced and circulated, made visible or invisible within migration scholarship. This chapter deals with one amongst the many issues of power within the world of migration academics—that is, the way symbolic violence and intellectual dominance are exercised through language and linguistic skills (Bourdieu, 1991).

Let me begin with a personal anecdote, to give a personal stance on the topic (and thus, to start acknowledging my own positionality). More than 10 years ago, I happened to submit an article to an important journal specialized in international migration. When proceeding with the revision of the article, I was asked by the editor—prompted obviously by the referees' comments—to leave out part of my references, which were in actuality of crucial importance to my paper. The reason was that most of my references were in Italian and French and the readership of the journal would neither be familiar nor interested in such a literature. I was a junior scholar at the time, and due to other forms of power relations within the academy (among which the desperate need to publish in order to find a position), I was unable to resist this injunction. This anecdote is telling about the pervasiveness and naturalization of Anglophone hegemony, which is topical to this chapter.

The concept of 'Anglophone (or Anglo-American) hegemony' is a widely used expression referring to the way contemporary research is built around the dominance of English in terms of authorship, institutional affiliation, contexts under scrutiny, and theories arising (Kong & Qian, 2019). Scholars referring to Anglophone hegemony usually build upon Gramscian approaches of hegemony. Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher, has been indeed one of the first to theorize upon 'soft tools' of leadership, such as intellectual and moral tools, showing how language may become a tool of power (1975). Scholars referring to Gramsci show how Anglophone hegemony acts as a superstructure of dominance that allows understanding the way academic relations are structured around a core and a periphery. Anglophone hegemony is interpreted as a tool of soft power which may silence or stifle the voices emerging from other linguistic communities of knowledge.

Postcolonial studies—which have been instrumental to the debate on Anglophone hegemony—have been very much influenced by Gramscian approaches as well. They have shown that language is not only a significant marker of class and intellectual habitus but also a tool of perpetuation of colonial relationship and North-South divide, what Veronelli calls the "coloniality of language" (Veronelli, 2015). Of course, Anglophone hegemony and coloniality of language are not to be considered as equivalent: Spanish, Portuguese or French, being notoriously imperialist languages, have been as colonial as English as tools of domination. For instance, colonial France has set up *francophonie* as a tool of soft power that still wields some clout over its former colonial territories through the so-called "politiques de la francophonie" (Mbembe & Mabanckou, 2018). *Francophonie* policies are based on a set of cultural and scientific institutions and agencies (AUF, AFD, Instituts Français, for instance), aiming to build networks of cooperation, as well as to promote and fund activities based on the use of the French language. This is why the French case, which I will develop below, is particularly ambivalent and interesting: French scholarship, on the one hand, suffers marginalization from the Anglophone core, but at

the same time builds itself on its own colonial and Francocentric traditions and cooperation (not least when it comes to empirical research, since French scholars often privilege field sites based in former colonial—Francophone—countries).

However, within the academic sphere, English has undoubtedly risen as the leading and absolutely unchallenged language of production and circulation of knowledge. As Ansi Paasi shows, this is partly due to the capitalist evolution of the organization of knowledge which is to an increasing degree based on market-like operations. Ansi Paasi argues that this process leads to the homogenization of social science publication practices (Paasi, 2005), which is detrimental to the debate and the progresses of knowledge.

Anglophone hegemony has been commented and debated in several fields of research, be they disciplinary or interdisciplinary. This is the case, for instance, of Geography (Garcia-Ramon, 2003; Gregson et al., 2003; Aalbers, 2004; Hancock, 2016; Kong & Qian, 2019), a disciplinary field in which a lively debate on anglophone hegemony has developed at least since the mid-2000s (Paasi, 2015). *Gender Place and Culture*, a prominent journal in feminist geography, has even published a special issue entitled ‘Does Anglophone hegemony permeate Gender, Place and Culture?’ (cf. Garcia Ramon et al., 2006) More recently, Virginie Mamadouh, a leading political geographer, has pointed at the uneven geographies of scholarship and the way the increasing use of English constantly reinforces inequalities in the field of knowledge (Mamadouh, 2018). In the discipline of anthropology, the reflection on Anglophone hegemony has also been very intense. Of course, Anglophone hegemony contradicts and challenges the very identity of the discipline of anthropology, which seeks to pay attention to local cultures, contextualized approaches, specific idioms and vernacular categories. At the same time, however, it is coherent with the colonial and extractivist history of the discipline (Burman, 2018). Such authors as Lins Reibero, for instance, have shown how imperialism reproduces the hegemony of the Anglo-American core in the world system of anthropological production (Lins Ribeiro, 2014).

However, surprisingly enough, and unlike geography and anthropology, the issue of Anglophone hegemony has been rarely addressed within migration studies, but for a few exceptions (Kofman, 2020; Bastia and Kofman, Chap. 7, this volume). Such a *rendez-vous manqué* between migration studies and linguistic reflexivity is even more puzzling as migration scholars do generally speak more than one language and work in different linguistic contexts. One cannot but wonder why such a diversity of languages, which is part and parcel to the world of migration, may have been erased from the mainstream field of scientific production on migration.

Analyzing migration studies through the lens of linguistic hegemony raises a series of questions about visibility and scientific recognition within the field: who speaks as a migration scholar today? In which language does he or she speak? Can migration scholarship be reduced and circumscribed to the Anglophone world? If not, how can we overcome the pitfalls of the Anglophone or Anglo-American dominance in the field? All these questions can seem naïve but force us to ponder over contextualization of knowledge production and limits to the so-called ‘internationalization of research’ (Kofman, 2020).

In this chapter, I argue that thinking migration scholarship in terms of linguistic hegemony helps us to approach different aspects of inequalities and exclusion within the academic world, namely the marginalization of approaches and research developed in other places and language. This marginalization conflates to some extent with the exclusion of an important part of research originating from the Global South. Such a situation of inequality is also reinforced by the current international publication system ('international' being often used as a synonym of Anglophone), which involves journals rankings (all in English), prominent names and specific research centers and projects, mainly located in the US, Canada, the UK, the Netherlands and, to some extent, Northern European countries.

The chapter is structured as follows: I first point at the limits of existing cartographies of migration studies, which have overlooked the linguistic variety of migration scholarship. I then advocate a more reflexive approach to linguistic hegemony within the field of migration scholarship and call for a more inclusive research on migration. Then, I present the French context of migration scholarship, its awkward and paradoxical position as a former core and a new periphery, and its relations with other French-speaking contexts, in particular the Global South French-speaking countries. Finally, I demonstrate why it is necessary to work on the construction of a multilingual field of migration scholarship, and will discuss the possible strategies to encourage new voices and languages to emerge within such a field.

As I shall explain more precisely later, my reflection is situated and far from unambiguous since it stems from a specific viewpoint—that is, the one of a French scholar; French migration scholarship being—on the one hand—rather marginalized from its mainstream academic community of international scholars and—on the other hand—at the core of a former—and still important in some ways—colonial (and linguistic) empire. In the context of this specific chapter, my experience as a French scholar can be useful in order to give an illustration of the various dilemmas and evolutions faced by the French field of migration research today.

8.1 A View off the Map: Migration Scholarship Beyond the Anglosphere

In the last decades, migration studies have grown and developed as an increasingly autonomous domain of research (Lee et al., 2014). This development is in line with growing social sensitivity to international migration and its political topicality, as well as with the trend in academic research towards greater specialization and interdisciplinarity (Hollifield, 2020). While observing the increase in the volume of research on migration, scholars have described the situation as a 'coming of age' of migration studies (Pisarevskaya et al., 2020b). In particular, Pisarevskaya, Levy and Scholten have addressed the issue of institutionalization of migration studies and the tension between unification and fragmentation of the field. In a series of articles that have been crucial to a better understanding of migration scholarship, they argue

diverse epistemic communities coexist within the field. As such, their research makes an important contribution to the epistemology of the field.

However, there are considerable limits to their research, which has relied exclusively on English sources (Scopus, Web of science) without hardly acknowledging the existence of migration research in other linguistic areas. As the authors say, non-English journals were omitted from their data collection because the algorithm is only able to scour one language. Thus, their research seriously underestimates the current diversity of languages within migration scholarship, which in turn may give the illusion of a unified—English-speaking—field of scholarship. To be fair, in a couple of papers, the authors (Pisarevskaya et al., 2020a, b) make their own self-critique and point at the limits of their dataset: “both because of the language restriction of the algorithm and because of the Global North’s dominance in the field that is mentioned above, there is likely to be an under-representation of scholarship from the Global South in our dataset”. But when they raise (quite briefly) the issue of the under-representation of research from the global South, the only example they bring into the discussion is taken from an anglophone African network of migration scholars, NOMRA.

My purpose here is not to indulge in a critique of Pisarevskaya, Levy, Scholten and Jansen¹ but rather to use it as an example of the recurrent invisibilisation of certain strands of migration scholarship. There is nothing exceptional to their approach indeed. Any piece of research tackling migration scholarship in the last decades in the top journals will focus uniquely on Anglophone research, without even acknowledging the limits of such an approach (see for other examples: Lee et al., 2014; Carling, 2015). Though it is less clear-cut, it is also the case with several books being nonetheless extremely insightful companions to migration scholars: *Migration theory*, edited by Caroline Brettell and Jim Hollifield (2022), does not engage that much with non Anglophone migration scholarship (to the exception of Hollifield chapter—a notoriously Francophone and Francophile scholar). Similarly, De Haas, Castles and Miller’s *Age of migration* (2017) pays limited attention to scholarship written in other languages than English, it generally uses non Anglophone literature mostly to refer to empirical case studies and examples. Once again, this is by no means exceptional and is also illustrative of the implicit (and sophisticated)—division of intellectual labor between theory and intellectual debate, on the one hand—which has to be in English—and empirical data or case-studies, on the other hand—which can sometimes build on materials collected in other linguistic contexts.

Depending on whether one is an optimist or a pessimist, there are two possible explanations of the lack of recognition of other languages than English within migration scholarship. The optimistic version would uphold that the field is sufficiently internationalized for these issues no longer to be raised, as everybody is now able to write and publish in English. Allegedly, power relations related to language within Academia do not exist anymore or at least are less important than in the past,

¹ Others have already done so: Chan (2020); and Kofman (2020).

and thus, do not need to be addressed. Scholten *and al.* for instance found that “English has now become the lingua-franca for academic research on migration in a rather organic manner”. On the other hand (pessimistic), one could consider that other voices—and other languages than English—have just been stifled and invisibilized from the official mapping of the field. Anglo-american hegemony may have silenced ideas and intellectual debates taking place in other places. Of course, neither of these two opposing answers is completely true and the role of a reflexive approach to linguistic issues is precisely to endeavor to add some nuance.

However, as a matter of fact, the development of migration scholarship during the last decades has not been limited to the anglophone world. In the last decades, research on international migration has increased and developed in several parts of the world and several languages: not only in English but also in Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Arabic, Turkish, Portuguese, Russian, and many other languages (Chan, 2020). It has also been institutionalized in several ways: graduate programs, research centers (such as Colef in Mexico or Migrinter and Urmis in France), specialized departments have flourished everywhere. More recently, transnational fora of scholars have developed, connecting migration scholars and institutions. For instance, in francophone Africa, several observatories of international migration have been set up and have played an important role in renewing knowledge and debate on international migration. Ateliers de la pensée, an important forum for African thinkers and activists taking place each year in Dakar (Senegal), has proposed several panels on migration and circulation as well. Attesting to this general development of the field all over the world is the emergence of a number of interdisciplinary scholarly journals in many languages. The table in the appendix gives a—non-exhaustive—list of examples on some of the non-Anglophone migration journals launched since the 1960s.² Some of these journals have an important role in the development of migration scholarship, be it at the level of the country in which they are based or at the international level.

As this list evidences, the number of journals is significant and testifies that the field of migration scholarship is lively and multilingual. We could do the same exercise looking at other types of publications, such as book series. If we take the example of a single country such as Marocco, a plethora of book series specialized in international migration has developed in the last decades—such as *Editions de la Fondation Hassan 2 pour les Marocains Résidant à l'Étranger* (<https://www.fh2mre.ma/category/fondation/recherche-documentation/publications>), the publications of *Association Marocaine d'Études et de Recherche sur les Migrations* (<http://amerm.org/publications>) or the publications of *Observatoire régional des Migrations* in Agadir for instance (Jamid & Schmoll, *forthcoming*).

²I am grateful to my colleague Olivier Clochard for providing many of these examples.

8.2 French Research, at the Core of a Marginalized Empire

Here, I need to acknowledge my very Euro- and Franco-centered approach, and apply reflexivity to my own context of research. Drawing on my positionality, I will attempt at pointing at the different pitfalls and dilemmas of working in the French context and the necessity of engaging with other contexts of research and other languages; but at the same time address the unsatisfactory situations of working in a context dominated by English. France is an awkward case when it comes to thinking research hegemony and inequalities within social sciences. There is indeed something paradoxical about French scholarship, as it is both a core and a periphery of research geopolitics. On the one hand, French social sciences, to the exception of economists and a reduced part of demographers and sociologists (the latest representing mostly the quantitative part of sociology), is still very much produced and debated in French around its own journals,³ thus in a rather marginal position in relation to mainstream international social sciences research. On the other hand, France is the core of a former empire that is—still—hegemonic—in many ways. French is the fifth most spoken language in the world after Mandarin Chinese, English, Spanish and Arabic and there are some 300 million French speakers in 33 countries around the world. Spreading French language in the world is still a priority of French diplomacy. In terms of research politics, it means that various kinds of economic and institutional support are accessible for scholars who choose French as their language of publication and communication. Apart from national funding agencies (such as ANR), research programs may be funded by soft power institutions that explicitly support international collaboration in French, that is ‘francophonie’ which I mentioned above in the introduction.

Then, what about the specific field of migration research? France was the first European country to become—at least from the mid-nineteenth century—an important country of immigration (Noiriel, 1988). However, it should be reminded that France, unlike other countries like the US for instance, became aware of being a country of immigration quite late. In France, the field of migration studies developed during the 1970s and 1980s. At that time, scholars were politically engaged and research was meant to provide tools to fight the inequalities and discrimination to which those known at the time as ‘immigrant workers’ were subjected. In the 1970s, French research on migration developed in several disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology and geography. Some authors became core to the field, such as Algerian sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad, a researcher at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales: still today, Abdelmalek Sayad (1999) is one of the few French-writing migration scholars whose publications (posthumous ‘La double absence’ published in 1999, with a Pierre Bourdieu foreword) has been translated and circulated in English (in 2004). During the 1980s and the 1990s, French migration scholarship became more institutionalized with the foundation of

³For example, in sociology, *Revue Française de Sociologie*, *Sociétés Contemporaines*, *Actes de la recherche en science sociales*, etc.

several research centers (Urmis, Migrinter, Diasporas) and journals (Cahier de l'Urmis, Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales, Migrations Sociétés) who joined other previously existing journals (Hommes et Migrations). A further step in the institutionalization of the field was taken with the opening of Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration in Paris in 2007—a museum closely connected to historical research (Green, 2007)—whose permanent exhibition was entirely overhauled under the supervision of a scientific board composed of more than 40 scholars in 2023. Another important step has been the creation in 2018 of the Convergences Migrations Institute a research institute in migration studies, which brings together more than 700 scholars specialized in various areas of migration research. The Institute is run by French demographer François Héran, professor at Collège de France, the highest-rank teaching and research institution in France.

However, French scholarship on migration is everything but an island: epistemic nationalism is tempered by participation in networks, programs and other informal networks in French that merge to some extent with the contours of the former empire. For instance, the research center Migrinter, an important research team on migration based in Poitiers, has developed numerous and sustained partnerships with African scholars, and important scholars on migration in Tunisia, Morocco or Senegal have most often graduated in France and have been trained between Europe and Africa.

These French and francophone developments have taken place outside the context of anglophone research, and one could wonder why it is so distant. There may be two hypotheses regarding this question: lack of skills in English and subsequent marginalization; lack of interest in anglophone research and autonomy of the francophone field. The truth probably lies in between those two propositions, thus in the ambivalence of the grey area spanning between hegemony and marginalization which is typical of the French situation.

Let us look more closely at the first proposition (lack of skills and subsequent marginalization): French scholars read journals in French, do not systematically go to international conferences and do not systematically read anglophone scholarship, though this is increasingly less true, as the increasing attendance of IMISCOE's conferences by French scholars show. However, even if French scholars increasingly use and cite literature in English, it remains that, they may spontaneously do not feel at ease with writing in English since most of them have never studied or worked in an anglophone context. Here we should remind how writing in English is difficult when one has not been socialized to it: many migration scholars in France (as in other linguistic contexts, such as the German one) may have other linguistic skills but are not able to conform to the writing norms of the anglophone world. The differences between English and French in terms of writing expectations and norms are considerable. Moreover, French universities usually offer scarce training in academic English and there are few facilities in France which may help you to publish in English—as languages centers within research institutions for instance. Making a clumsy use of English has several implications: it makes scholars over-simplifying their results and the concepts they use—not to mention that some specific Francophone concepts, such as 'circulation migratoire' for instance, are tricky to

translate, because they simply do not exist in English.⁴ In terms of publications, it means that their papers will often be rejected because considered as non-sufficiently relevant or important. This may be particularly the case for qualitative empirical results which is necessarily more difficult to translate than a table of data (data being, more or less, a universal language).

As for the second proposition (lack of interest and autonomy of the francophone field of research): many French scholars do not show any interest in publishing in English. Traditionally—though increasingly less systematically—the French career advancement and funding system does not particularly encourage scholars to publish in English. In some disciplines such as History or Sociology, it may be much more important to have published a book with an important French publisher (such as Seuil, Presses Universitaires de France, La Découverte, for instance) than having published papers in top international journals. Besides, France has developed its own and somehow independent tradition of publications on migration research, in connection with other francophone countries. The importance of French as a working language thus reaches far beyond the borders of the hexagonal academy. For instance, many scholars from French-speaking countries publish in French migration journals, including scholars from African countries, and, to a lesser extent—because they are much more familiar to anglophone journals—colleagues from Canada, Switzerland and Belgium. Scholars from other countries (Italy, Turkey, etc.) may also choose to publish in French whenever they were educated using French as a second language, or because they have studied or worked in France.

This is the paradoxical situation of French research today: on the one hand, French journals and publications continue to have a relative clout and appeal—within a group of countries or regions, as well as with scholars from other countries. On the other hand, research produced in French is often invisible or inaccessible to other linguistic areas.

8.3 Overcoming Linguistic Hegemony: Strategies and Tools for a More Multilingual and Inclusive Research Field

In this chapter, I have first tried to defend the necessity to acknowledge the existence of a lively field of migration scholarship beyond the anglophone world. Then, I described the position of French scholarship as rather ambivalent, between core (or a former empire, still active to some extent) and periphery (marginalized). Moving away from the specificity of the French case, one question arises: is there a space to engage critically with linguistic hegemony within the field of migration scholarship? How can different linguistic spheres of migration scholarship have a dialog?

⁴Additionally, it should be noted that French scholars are likely just as rigorous and linguistically purist as their Anglophone counterparts when evaluating the work of scholars for whom French is not their primary language, or even Francophone scholars from the Global South whose linguistic habits and expressions may differ from the French (Veret, 2023).

Are strategies possible for overcoming linguistic hegemony, without replacing one hegemony with another? The answer to these questions need articulation and will be complex. Here, I will outline three possible directions for inducing a change, in the sense of proceeding towards greater linguistic diversity and inclusion of non-Anglophone scholars within the field of migration studies: (a) promoting multilingual research and polyglot scholars; (b) developing translation policies and practices; (c) expanding the limits of language and finding new voices and ways to exchange and communicate within our research communities.

- (a) First of all, researchers ought to improve their capacity to work in more than one language and try to access and, conversely, engage with a literature that is produced in several languages. Multilingual research is critical because it helps bring into the research a diversity of styles, contexts and approaches. It is important that scholars strive to engage with materials written in other languages than their first language. Generally speaking scholars should be socialized with literature produced in several languages: this can be implemented in several ways, for instance, by actively promoting transnational groups of scholars (reading groups for instance) that help make accessible research produced in different languages. Navigating between different linguistic spheres is a considerable advantage for scholars who can do so, since this makes them cross-fertilize ideas and concepts and opens new imaginaries. Promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism also implies some change in references and citational practices, to avoid predicaments similar to the personal anecdote I exposed in the introduction.

Another potent reason to promote multilingual research is that research is locally embedded in social contexts, and very often produced through partnerships with migrants and asylum seekers, activists, students, inhabitants, etc. To publish in another language may mean to uproot ourselves from this context, to cut ourselves off from these collaborations and partnerships. Researching and writing in a language which is understood by most of the people from the country/place/region one works with may be an ethical commitment in terms of reciprocity. In that sense, research in other languages than English may contribute to a more equal, inclusive, reciprocal relation between the researchers and the communities studied. This also raises the issue of categories of interpretation that are used, as ways of writing and doing research emerge not just from different vocabularies, but from a number of social and political specificities (Hancock, 2016, see also the researches undertaken in the Global (De)centre: <https://globaldecentre.org>). Writing in the same language as that in which the research was conducted may prevent from the use of global/hegemonic categories of interpretation (such as ‘superdiversity’ or ‘transnational’), which are generally expressed in English, in order to promote more context-sensitive and vernacular categories.

- (b) We also need—especially for those coming from the linguistic peripheries—a strong translation policy. ‘Translation is the language of Europe’, as Umberto Eco used to say. It shall actually be the language of the world. Of course,

translation is not the panacea nor the only solution to the problem of linguistic hegemony, but it is rather a tool in order to achieve dissemination and accessibility of research in more than one language. Translation allows not only to maintain linguistic diversity, but to render accessible a diversity of works produced in several contexts. Let us return to the French example: as Eleonore Kofman pointed out, French research on migration continues to be ignored by scholars unless it is translated in English (Kofman, 2020). As a matter of fact, France provides the anglophone academic world many references, and anglophone migration scholars cite many Francophone scholars such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Lefebvre, but also more recently Mbembé or Fassin and Agier because they have been translated into English. As for French or Francophone linguistic policies, this implies that we shall definitely continue to promote translation into English.

In France, this option has been chosen by the group of historians editing the famous *Annales* journal. They have opted for an online translation of all the articles for a few years now, thanks to a partnership between Editions de l'EHESS and Cambridge University Press. The editorial board explains the reasons for taking such a decision: "since the 2000s, a twofold trend had become increasingly pronounced: a decline in subscriptions and consultations of the printed journal in favor of digital formats and, regrettably, a gradual move away from French as an international language of scientific communication. Faced with these transformations, the editorial board of the *Annales* made the active choice to explore new possibilities and forms of publication. Rather choosing between a dogmatic defense of the French language and the increasing publication of articles submitted in English, we came up with the idea of a truly bilingual publication, enabling us to introduce the highest-quality Francophone research to communities far beyond France, but also to publish, in French, authors from all over the world. We also chose to support the production and diffusion of the printed journal, which remains very important for us, with an ambitious policy for its digital development".⁵

The same type of observation, on the progressive abandonment of French and the need to engage with scholars publishing in other languages can be applied to French migration scholarship. It has led the French *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, to opt for translation. Since its foundation 36 years ago, this journal has always had the ambition of publishing research on migration in three languages: French, English and Spanish, leaving the choice of language to the authors. The idea was to open the field to a multilingual research policy. While the journal is not referenced as a top journal in migration studies, it has emerged as an important platform for scholars willing to engage with a francophone readership and conversely, for francophone researchers willing to publish research in English or Spanish. It has an international editorial

⁵ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/annales-histoire-sciences-sociales-english-edition/information/a-message-from-the-annales-january-2017>

committee (mostly French-speaking though) and a network of scientific correspondents present across the world. For 3 years, in particular, and against the background of the growing importance of English as a language of communication (also for French researchers), the journal has endeavoured to practice an almost systematic policy of translation, so that the articles may be accessible at least in two languages, generally French and English. This translation policy is tricky: firstly, it requires economic and human resources. Secondly, as said above, writing norms differ between languages. But the diffusion of bilingual publications may also be a way to broaden the variety of writing styles and not to over-standardize the norms of article writing. Thus, it is clear that bi- (or tri-) lingualism is a political choice that requires the mobilization of many resources. Other migration journals, even located in the anglophone sphere, have developed similar translation policies. This is for instance the case for *Forced Migrations Review*, based in Oxford, which publishes issues in four languages.

Another example of the use of translation to reach out a broader audience is what the *migreurop* collective has remarkably undertaken. This group includes researchers and activists from Europe and Africa working on a critical approach to European migration policies, mostly in French. It has made considerable research efforts to produce critical cartographies, an important tool for critical knowledge and research on migration policies. Unfortunately, for years their work was only accessible in French. Then, thanks to an agreement between Armand Colin, a French publisher, and Routledge, their Atlas is now available in English, with the title *Atlas of migration in Europe. A critical geography of migration policies*.

- (c) Last but not least, and beyond multilingual scholarship, we shall try to reflect on the development of other languages and modes of communication, towards a more multivocal scholarship, in order to overcome linguistic and academic boundaries and give room to new voices and languages emerging from the research. First of all, we shall, following the suggestions of Mbembe and Mabanckou (2018), decolonize the language, to “make Francophony less French” and Anglophony less Anglo-american: this means to decentre the language and subvert its own boundaries, by creolizing it. This may help scholars to step away from their comfort zone and engage with the complexities of the field (and the world); toward more organic and cosmopolitan research practices, towards a better recognition of the world and universal nature of migration as a topic.

Moreover, research is increasingly becoming more participative and bottom-up. Migration scholarship shall be more opened to other modes of expressions, including not relying solely on written language. We need to tear down research hierarchies and open up possibilities of co-produced knowledge, in the wake of feminist and decolonial epistemologies that have emphasized the necessity of ‘researching with’ instead of ‘researching on’. Among the most promising developments in recent years, the increasing connections between art, science and activism is a good point to start from: theatre and performances, podcasts, the use of visual arts such as photographs, documentaries, movies and music,

etc. Advocating the emergence of alternative voices and new languages opens avenues for fruitful ways of doing, exchanging and enriching our research practices, which may help us overcome the rigid and compartmentalizing boundaries of academic language.

8.4 Conclusion

A few decades ago Caribbean author Édouard Glissant (1997) pointed at the world nature of language in a world of relations. Migration scholars shall not live in a shrinking world, nor should they accept to reduce their world to a single language. This chapter has highlighted the role of anglophone hegemony in structuring power relations within the field of migration scholarship. In doing so, it pointed at the making of the legitimacy of specific forms, places and languages of knowledge production opposed to the illegitimacy/invisibility of others. It has also acknowledged the existence of a lively and multilingual field of migration scholarship. As many other chapters in this volume, this chapter has also transformative aims, namely the development of a more inclusive and linguistically open field of migration research, with the premise that no one benefits from the current linguistic and cultural compartmentalization of research. In order to make the sphere of migration studies more open and inclusive, languages constitute an important aspect. The question of multilingualism allows us to take a step towards tearing down walls and building a true policy of research in relation with a world in transformation. It may not be that difficult: due to the very nature of their object of study—which is, by definition, international—but also due to their specific trajectories (many are those who have a migration background), the majority of migration scholars speak and work in more than one language. Encouraging multilingual scholarships, promoting active translation policies, developing new forms of language and communication (including artistic ones) may be some ways to overcome the building of linguistic and national walls which is, beyond the intellectual worlds, one of the most threatening trends of the contemporary world.

Appendix

Some examples of migration journals whose primary language of publication is not English (drawing on examples taken in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, China, Croatia, France, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia). For a more complete list see Clochard, Dubus, 2024.

Start Date

- 1964: Studi Emigrazione

- 1965:** Hommes & Migrations Documents and Hommes & Migrations Études, formerly Cahiers nord-africains (1950–1965)
- 1971:** Ethnies
- 1985:** Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales
- 1985:** Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos/el Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos (CEMLA)
- 1986:** Journal of Overseas Chinese History (in chinese)
- 1987:** Plein droit/publication trimestrielle/Gisti
- 1988:** Cahiers Migrations (anciennement *Sybidi Papers*)
- 1989:** Migrations Société/publication bimestrielle/CIEMI
- 1989:** Frontera Norte/El Colegio de la Frontera Norte
- 1992:** Écarts d'identité
- 1992:** Migrations Santé (précédé par des bulletins trimestriels)
- 1995:** Cahiers de l'Urmis, now Migrations et Altérités (since 2021)
- 1995:** Estudios Migratorios. Revista Galega de Análise das migracións/coédité par le Conseil culturel galicien et l'Université de Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle
- 1996:** Migraciones/Instituto Universitario de Estudios sobre Migraciones de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas, de Madrid
- 2000:** Diversité urbaine (formerly Cahiers du Gres)
- 2001:** [Migraciones Internacionales](#)/El Colegio de la Frontera Norte
- 2002:** Diasporas
- 2003:** Migration and Ethnic Themes/Migracijske i etničke teme
- 2003:** Migración y Desarrollo,⁶ <https://estudiosdeldesarrollo.mx/migracionydesarrollo>
- 2007:** Mondì Migranti. Rivista di studi e ricerche sulle migrazioni internazionali (Centro Studi Medi')
- 2008:** e-Migrinter/Migrinter
- 2010:** Revista Internacional de Estudios Migratorios (Universidad de Almeria)
- 2011:** (Re)penser l'exil (end in 2017)
- 2014:** ODISEA. Revista de Estudios Migratorios, <https://publicaciones.sociales.uba.ar/index.php/odisea>
- 2016:** Jeunes et Mineurs en Mobilités/OMM & Migrinter
- 2016:** Hijra. Revue Marocaine de droit d'asile et migrations (Morocco)
- 2016:** Huellas de la Migración, <https://huellasdelamigracion.uaemex.mx>
- 2017:** Refuge, Revue canadienne sur les réfugiés, <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/refuge/#back-issues>
- 2018:** De facto (Institut Convergence Migrations)
- 2019:** Afriques en mouvement
- 2021:** La Revue Africaine des Migrations Internationales
- 2021:** Arabic Journal of Displacement and Asylum (in Arabic)
- 2021:** Marronages. Les questions raciales au crible des sciences sociales

⁶<https://estudiosdeldesarrollo.mx/migracionydesarrollo/numeros>

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Chapter 9

Racism in/Through Migration Studies



Faten Khazaei

9.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the rare and only recent attention to race and racism in migration studies. This rarity is increasingly debated and reflected upon within the field itself. Some recent critical accounts reflect on how migration studies by monitoring racialised bodies' movements reaffirm racist conceptions (Mongia, 2018; Schinkel, 2018; Anderson, 2019; El-Enany, 2020); how it becomes part and parcel of a biopolitical governing which is inherently neocolonial, “wedded to [fabricated] bureaucratic categories and state money” (Schinkel, 2018, p. 14); and how in sum it is a knowledge-production project bound up with the workings of power (Schinkel, 2017; Anderson & Dahinden, 2021; see also Raghuram and Sondhi, Chap. 6, in this volume).

It was only in November 2020 after the global uprising against racial injustice in the context of Black Lives Matter movement, and within the context of a pandemic that killed disproportionately black and poor ethnic minorities, that IMISCOE as the largest interdisciplinary network of scholars in the field of migration in Europe, set a specific Anti-Racism Working Group. In the released statement received by e-mail at the time, we read,

Ever since the latest global movement against structural racism and racial injustice, IMISCOE has come together to address these long-overdue topics. We asked ourselves: what are our responsibilities and what can we actually and factually do in this moment moving forward to proactively engage with this movement and bring effective change within the community (e-mail received by members on 2 Nov. 2020).

While this initiative can testify to a change in taking race and racism more seriously, it was also released at a time where these issues returned to public debates and

F. Khazaei (✉)
Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK
e-mail: faten.khazaei@northumbria.ac.uk

agenda with such force that remaining indifferent to it was both impossible and tactless.

It should be noted that the critic of the lack of consideration of race and racism does not apply to all work produced in relation to migration with the same degree (see Grosfoguel et al., 2015; Erel et al., 2016). For instance, there are scholars who do not consider themselves as migration scholars, yet have studied for a long time race relations, ethnic and racial discrimination and postcolonial conditions with regards to minorities whether categorised as migrants or not (e.g. in anthropology works such as that of Nadia Fadil or Mayanthi Fernando; in cultural studies the tradition of Stuart Hall and his followers). I do not include these works in the general category of Migration Studies I use in this chapter. That being said, following the scope of this book which advocates for reflexivity, I deliberately use the general category of Migration Studies to invite all of us who work on migration-related issues to scrutinise our own work, to search for keywords such as “race” and “racism” and to see when and how often they have been mentioned in our accounts of migration.

Furthermore, among those scholars who do situate themselves within the field of Migration Studies (and are affiliated to IMISCOE for example) there have been critical accounts of the ways in which mainstream migration studies play a role in the problematisation of “migrants”, by providing factual architecture that gives core to the contemporary racist governance of Europe’s borders (De Genova, 2018). These scholars argue that the field of Migration Studies, by providing so-called objective scientific facts on “problematic” groups such as *migrants*, *refugees*, *asylum seekers*, *foreigners*, *minorities*, *Muslims* and so on, has long contributed to the taken for granted otherness of migrants, underlying the European migration-related policy making (Karakayalı & Rigo, 2010; De Genova, 2013, 2016, 2018; Andersson, 2014; Scheel, 2017). They also emphasise the fact that “the migrant is a social construct” (Anderson & Dahinden, 2021, p. 34), and one should not assume a difference between migrants and non-migrants (Dahinden, 2016). These reflexive works condemn finally the “uncritical embracing of the nation/state/society as a natural social and political form” which run the risk of intellectual and political “co-optation that makes migration scholars implicated in nation-state making processes” (Anderson & Dahinden, 2021, p. 35; Favell, 2016; De Genova, 2018; Schinkel, 2018; Sharma, 2020).

These critical voices have suggested several recommendations to overcome some of these ethical and epistemological but also political problems with migration studies. This entire book being an example of them (e.g. for a helpful typology of possible modalities of reflexivity see the contribution of Dieterich and Nieswand, Chap. 5, in this volume, especially their categories of intersectional and political reflexivity). Without repeating them, this chapter concentrates on one recommendation. Namely the fact that Migration Studies should tackle the issues of racism explicitly. That they should draw on the lessons learned from decades of work in Critical Race Studies and also on Postcolonial Studies to avoid the risk of doing the work of neocolonial European governance, and ending up unwillingly to contribute to the upholding of a “racial order of things” (Mukherjee, 2006). It has been already

mentioned by some migration scholars that migration studies are “autoreferential” (Anderson & Dahinden, 2021, p. 34); meaning that the researchers in the field, “often start from the same theoretical premises, so that their research is into more or less the same aspects and processes, and systematically fails to take others into consideration” (Rath, 2001, p. 2).

Several assumptions and/or justifications have been put forward including by the authors of this volume (e.g. Dieterich and Nieswand, Chap. 5) to explain why for example aspects of race and racism are not taken into consideration. The following will delve into some of those assumptions, but it argues further that when problems of race and racism *is* mentioned, or when bringing works prior and outside migration studies in is deemed necessary, they remain in the pieces which are plea-like or in more theoretical contributions about the future of the field (e.g. Dahinden, 2016; Schinkel, 2018; Anderson, 2019). They hardly influence the mainstream or traditional core of migration studies (see also Drotbohm, Chap. 17, in this volume). The research questions and empirical investigations follow the mainstream tradition of the field, where racism remains hardly or rarely mentioned. Meanwhile, critical scholars keep asking themselves why migration studies cannot interfere and suggest effective alternative narratives to political problematisations of migrants. Audre Lorde’s famous quote might be helpful here, as “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 1984).

In this chapter I discuss how some lessons learnt from Critical Race and Postcolonial Studies can help overcoming migration studies’ lack of (or rare) engagement with race and racism in the study of contemporary migration-related issues.

9.2 Learning Lessons from Studies of Race, Racism and Colonialism

This section will give a non-exhaustive, yet comprehensive account of some of the ways in which Critical Race Studies and Postcolonial Studies have tackled some of the main concerns of Migration Studies for decades, without taking the risk of contributing to the European neocolonial and racist governance of immigration. The argument is that we do not necessarily need to forge new theories and concepts, but to draw more from the wealth of existing literature to better understand some of the contemporary narratives on migration. This will also help avoid the danger highlighted by Dieterich and Nieswand, Chap. 5, in this volume—namely, a purely rhetorical commitment to decolonisation and anti-racist initiatives by academics, without genuine engagement with their lessons.

By using Critical Race Studies, I refer to those works that expose not only the obvious and visible, but also the “hidden, invisible, forms of racist expressions and well-established patterns of racist exclusions that remain, unaddressed and uncompensated, structurally marking opportunities and access, patterns of income and

wealth, privilege and relative power” (Goldberg & Essed, 2002, p. 4). These works uncover what claims of race neutrality, tolerance and/or colour-blindness often conceal. Critical Race Studies “are rooted in the tradition of radical thinkers and movements against racial oppression and exploitation in the history of colonisation and decolonisation” (Essed & Nimako, 2006, p. 297). In turn, Postcolonial Studies here refer specifically to those works which look at both colonial histories and contemporary legacies of colonialism, in terms of imagination, narratives, technologies of government both within and outside colonised/colonising territories.

9.2.1 *Colonial Legacies and Governance of Migration*

Migration scholarship has been surprisingly slow in engaging with the ways in which colonial history and legacy impacted and shaped both the migratory phenomena itself, and the contemporary political attitudes towards, and public responses to those arriving at Europe’s borders (Mayblin & Turner, 2020). It is not to say that colonial legacies are the only force at play in shaping migration politics in contemporary Europe. There are indeed both continuities and discontinuities between colonial governance of mobility and the present-day European border regimes. But to fully understand the present, there is a need to explore histories and continuities of colonialism. As Bove (2000) observed, the struggle over history is also a struggle over the future. The battles for “the future is both won and lost” through “the battles for the stories of the past” (Bhambra, 2006, p. 5).

By putting a specific recent historical period as the starting point of their studies, migration scholars assume a *recent* diversity, created by the presence of so-called migrants; which in turn is often perceived as fundamentally problematic by European governments, media and most political parties (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). By putting emphasis on the role of (recent) migration in the creation of more diverse societies, with regards to their religious and ethnocultural compositions (Holtz et al., 2013), migration studies focus on creation of “new contexts in which ‘difference’ is constructed and inequalities are (re)produced” (Duemmler et al., 2010, p. 18). This assumption of *newness* of diverse contexts, however, downplays the complexity of the present in favour of a belief in a past that was “pure” (Bhambra, 2006, p. 5). The focus on “origins”, on “where” we have come from, is necessarily past directed and it often seeks to recreate the presumed cultural integrity of the past through policies of sometimes organised discrimination and/or (forced) migration (Bhambra, 2006, p. 5).

Take for example the ideas of *host society* and *people on the move*, both central to migration studies. Looking back at the histories of societies on the move, including the colonial endeavours of European empires, scholars in postcolonial studies have long been exposing the entire idea of “people with a migration background” as “the governing fictions they are” (Schinkel, 2018, p. 10). These studies of colonial adventures disrupt the taken for granted assumption behind many theories within

migration studies that there is still or there has ever been a *society* that is not mobile (Schinkel, 2018).

The silencing of the colonial production of meaning, whether it be through a forgetfulness or an intentional selective memory have consequences. The selective exclusion of critical perspectives and expertise on colonial legacies is more serious than just marginalising one particular paradigm (Essed & Nimako, 2006, p. 285). It is a case of what Stuart Hall (2000) used to call *historical amnesia*. Examples of which abound in European research. Take for instance Dutch minority research. This body of research whose paradigmatic foundations were laid in the late 1980s, focused largely on problematising ethnic minorities, while downplaying the ramifications of the colonial history and concomitant presuppositions of European (Dutch) cultural superiority underlying it (Essed & Nimako, 2006). Or in the Swiss case, while the idea of problematic assimilation of immigrants coming from more distant cultural spheres have been powerful throughout the twentieth century (Kury, 2003), often it has been read through the lens of the emergence of the nation state. But the colonial origins of it, namely the relation between the *self* and the *Other*, *cultural identity*, and *alterity* have remained less addressed within migration studies (Espahangizi, 2021, p. 110).

This assumption also makes many studies within migration studies to become “record keepers” of the presence of so-called migrants “at home”, ignoring the fact that many of these technologies of government have been used and invented abroad and in colonial times and contexts (Schinkel, 2018, p. 11). Stoler for example studied the moral assessments of Europeans of mixed blood and of “poor whites” in the East Indies (2002, 2009). Stoler refers to these “moral measurements” and explains the ways in which the colonial administrators of the nineteenth century used to assess the suitability of people from the colonies for “European society” before deciding to grant citizenship rights to them (2002, p. 17). Similar practices have been documented by Gouda (1995) in the Dutch colonial regime where a “taxonomy of ethnic traditions” was kept measuring the closeness of them based on European cultural taste and refinement. These studies show that one of the first stances of restrictive immigration policies started in fact with the end of the official colonial era to contain the movement of the formerly colonised and/or enslaved peoples (Hondius, 2011).

Despite these longstanding debates and proliferation of critical and reflexive trends, mainstream migration studies do not properly engage with this scholarship (Favell, 2016). One of the main arguments is that some national contexts are different from others, because of the lack of official colonial rule, for example. Although there has been an increasing attention to the close connections of seemingly colonial outsiders with the project of colonialism. This new body of research extends the investigation of discourses and practices related to migrants further into the colonial past and beyond the history of migration to Europe. It traces some of the representations, images, and narratives mobilised by public agents to explain their practices and captures the “continuities” of “knowledge, images, attitudes, practices and commodities [that] circulated in the colonial context” within places apparently

situated outside of the ambit of colonialism (e.g. the Swiss case: Purtschert et al., 2016, p. 293; see also Lavanchy, 2015; Michel, 2015).

Another argument for dismissing critical race studies—to which the next section returns more extensively—is that in some contexts it is more cultural or nationalist (nation-state) related exclusions rather than racial hierarchies and racism, which are the main logics at play in the current migration-related governance in Europe and especially after WWII. This mainly relates to the “culture versus race” debates which postulate that the “old racisms” having emphasised the biological characteristics of human hierarchisation are different from cultural-based “new racisms”. But this is neglecting the fact that historically, racism had always had two concomitant operational modes (Bilge & Forcier, 2016, p. 14): “racial naturalism” and “racial historicism” (Goldberg, 2002).

The first was based on the idea of the existence of human races and their natural hierarchy, which were transmissible hereditarily and were hence immutable. Then the “white race” was placed at the top of this hierarchical natural model. The second, however, had a more cultural component (Bilge & Forcier, 2016). The idea of the hierarchy of civilisations with culture-based justifications. Human societies have been conceptualised as placed in a linear process toward progress and civilisation, where the Europeans were at the end of that line to which all other cultures and civilisations should tend (Wicker, 1996) This usage of the concept of culture is undeniably linked to the construction of white civilised Europeans in contrast to the racialised uncivilised non-European “Others” (Saïd, 1978; Spivak, 1988).

In fact, the argument to replace race talk in Europe also centred on the idea of newness or a “new racism” that constituted a form of culturalism, as was briefly mentioned before (Balibar, 1991). Given that this new culturalism or cultural racism had no clear connection with a genetically based racial code, it was seen to represent a break with a biologically characterised racism (Hall, 1997). However, scholars like Balibar (1991) and Hall (1997) have questioned this alleged newness, arguing that to assert that the biological component of racism is its main characteristic is to ignore its ability to bind connotations to a variety of signifiers or markers of difference, thereby ultimately naturalising them by rendering them immutable. If the old and new racism can be differentiated in any way, their difference lies in the fact that the latter is able to “essentialize cultural differences” (Lentin, 2014, p. 1280) without resorting to what Hall (1997) refers to as a “genetic racial code”. In their interrogation of the relationship between culture and racism, scholars like Balibar (1991) have argued that biological determinism and the package of racialist projects could not hold in the absence of an essentialist notion of culture. The relationship between race and culture in the construction of racist notions remains unquestioned in the conceptualisation of the so-called new or cultural racism (Lentin & Titley, 2011, p. 70), and almost completely absent in mainstream migration studies. In reality race has always been about culture and the ascription of inferiority to some human groups compared to others, justified by referring to their differential achievements in terms of progress.

Of course, this is not to say that racism takes only one universal form and there is no need for contextualised analysis. As Goldberg points out in relation to his

concept of *Racial Europeanisation* (2006, p. 333), “Racisms have a history of travelling, and transforming in their circulation”. But the general argument is that the use of culture or cultural (in)compatibilities in anti-immigrant discourses are to abolish the taboo associated with the hierarchical classification of groups of people along state-centred or geographical—if not biological—lines, “making it possible to talk about difference as a problem in a time ‘when race is taboo’” (Lentin & Titley, 2011, p. 73). By pointing out the European racial denial, Goldberg suggests that race becomes “a problem everywhere else but Europe” (2006, p. 334). A mainstream thought that pursues three interrelated paths: “denial of race as socially, politically, and indeed morally relevant; an overriding focus on anti-Semitism as the real (and almost only) manifestation of racism; and the radical de-linking of the intellectual and political histories of colonialism and racism” (Goldberg, 2006, p. 343). The next section therefore looks at Critical Race Studies, in relation to the field of migration studies more specifically, to expose the place of race and racism in the governance of migration.

9.2.2 Race and Racism in Studying the Governance of Migration

As discussed earlier not all works within the field of migration studies are similar in terms of overlooking ramifications of racism within their account of migration-related issues. There is in fact some overlap where Critical Race Studies meet the critical end of Migration Studies, notably in the advocacy of transnationalism and cultural diversity (see Grosfoguel et al., 2015; Erel et al., 2016). “They are not completely mutually exclusive” (Essed & Nimako, 2006, p. 285). But critical explorations of the “historical and ideological underpinnings and ramifications of the fabrication of race and ethnicity remain less common” (Essed & Nimako, 2006, p. 307).

To highlight the lack of attention to racism in the mainstream perspectives of migration studies, Philomena Essed (2004) scanned title and abstracts of the Dutch journal of migration studies during the period of 1994 to 2002. She identified only two articles which explicitly focused on racism. Essed and Nimako’s explain that words like discrimination or racism get shunned from the vocabulary of what they call “the minority research industry” in the Netherlands (2006, p. 297), in such a way that by 1990s race critical research all but disappeared from the Dutch research agenda. Only remained a few exceptions produced by independent scholars who continued to write about systematic racism in the Netherlands (e.g. Mok, 1999; Van der Valk, 2002; Prins, 2004; Bal, 2005). Considering the fact that the Dutch scholars affiliated to the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) at the University of Amsterdam, were the first to chair IMISCOE, the Dutch case has specific importance in the history of institutionalisation of migration studies. That is due to the

role that those affiliated Dutch scholars played in setting IMISCOE's first research programs (Essed & Nimako, 2006).

There are some hypotheses that were put forward to explain why race and racism got marginalised in this way within the field of migration studies (see for instance Jashari, Chap. 2, in this volume). I will mention two of the most common explanations here, while emphasising that my main concern is not to answer that why question. It is however important to reflect at least briefly on those reasons, as one of the main features of reflexivity is to recognise that scientific terminology and related definitions of the problem are not neutral: "They imply a political perspective" (Essed & Nimako, 2006, p. 301; see also Schneider, Chap. 10, in this volume).

In fact, despite the common emphasis on nation-state logic as the main/specific force at play in the governance of migration as discussed above, some of the first works studying the so-called recent migration did contain references to race and racism at the beginning, before seeing it faded from the later works in the field. A surprising example of it can be found in the work of the two pioneers of migration studies in the Swiss context, namely Hoffman-Nowotny and Braun who both shared the diagnosis of a problematic Swiss "apartheid attitude" towards migration (Espahangizi, 2019, p. 50). Surprising because Hoffman-Nowotny was the person who later introduced the notion of "cultural distance", which was used by the Swiss government to justify its exclusionary model of three circles that famously discriminated against non-European (read racialised) migrants (Castles, 1994).

One of the reasons mentioned in the literature to explain a specific development of migration studies as a field of researching ethnic minorities rather than structural racism is the close relationship between policy makers and migration scholarship. This is exemplified by the active role of governments in institutionalising research to support policy making around migration. Practically most if not all research on ethnic minorities is funded directly by government-funded programs through specific calls both directly or via state-funded university institutes. There are several scholars that mention or investigate these close relationships between government-set agendas and the development of migration studies in different European countries. In the Netherlands for example, Essed and Nimako made visible the dynamic networking between policy makers and migration studies that resulted in the proliferation of this specific field of research in response to public policy; such as research in the form of reports or publications on ethnic minorities and their cultures or on policies in relation to ethnic minorities (2006, p. 307).

The close entanglement of this field of research with the state migration apparatus is apparent not only in terms of funding but also the research questions which are sometimes directed from state administrative units (Penninx & Scholten, 2009; Castles, 2010). To secure such funding social scientists are required to provide "useful" information about migration or more specifically about specific ethnic minority groups. This would not only re-create that logic of differentiation between those social groups but also reinforces the state migration apparatus (Dahinden, 2016). In this institutionalised migration apparatus, the research is not only part and parcel but also an important "producer of a worldview" where statistics about the share of migrants or people with migration background can be compared internationally as

basic knowledge part of every migration research which “is always retrievable but seldom reflected upon” (Dahinden, 2016, p. 5).

Few scholars who looked at the development of migration studies in a perspective of a history of knowledge, showed the important role this field of studies played in developing a certain discourse on migration as a problem (Espahangizi, 2019). In the Swiss context two previously mentioned pioneer books, *Sociocultural problems of incorporation of Italian foreign workers in Switzerland* by Rudolf Braun published in 1970, and *Sociology of the foreign worker problem* by Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny published in 1973, provided the unquestioned common premise from the very start that there was “a national problem”, “a nation state and a nationally constructed public” that set the framework for many migration research to come (Bommes & Thränhardt, 2010). In fact, the first federal research commission on migration in Switzerland, which started its work in the early 1960s, was directly related to an initial intention of controlling a problem of “over-foreignization” (*Überfremdung*) of Switzerland to be stopped by politics of assimilation (Espahangizi, 2019). These examples show an uncomfortable coalition between the academia and state-directed logic of the nation-state that promotes national interests by providing national research funds (Dahinden, 2016). Edward Saïd’s observation about the serious effort made by social scientists in upholding a particular identity instead of thinking critically “about the national program itself” (Saïd, 1995, p. 291) finds relevance here. As Anderson rightfully observes migration debates are central to nation-state invention, and not a challenge to it as it is often presumed in the field (Anderson & Dahinden, 2021, p. 38).

Another reason which is put forward to explain overlooking of structural racism, or delegitimising race-related terminology and concepts in the field of migration studies, is racism within the academia itself. Namely the paradigmatic and ideological underpinning of a colourless research as mainstream in the social sciences from which migration studies are not exempt (Mullard et al., 1991). This colour-blindness being in part the result of the marginalisation and delegitimation of researchers of colour from the academia. By marginalising the standpoint and the first-hand experience of racism of those researchers, the systematic prejudices against migrants were not perceived as instances of structural racism but as discrimination. Discrimination in turn was mainly defined as the product of prejudice and individual street-level bureaucrats (e.g. Uyl et al., 1986). Doing so prejudice and discrimination were individualised and dismissed from the studies of migration-related issues (Essed & Nimako, 2006). These politics of research on race relations were more or less common to developments of the field of migration studies in several European countries through linking up and networking opportunities with similar institutes and research programmes within the European Union (Essed & Nimako, 2006). Therefore, it can be argued that racism is not a collateral damage or unintended consequence of seemingly practical and “realistic” need of governing more diverse and multicultural societies due to globalisation, but a fundamental underlying condition of it (Goldberg, 2002; Mongia, 2018; El-Enany, 2020).

A telling example of it can be seen in the events related to Windrush scandal where British citizens of African descent were considered to be migrants and

potentially illegal and their status were over scrutinised, some were illegally evicted, fired and even deported. The kinds of this scandal have been increasingly studied to show the interrelation between migration and “race” (Lentin, 2008; Bhattacharya, 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019; El-Enany, 2020; Sharma, 2020).

That being said, the aim here is not to dwell on the political reasons behind this silencing of race critical paradigms in the field of migration studies. What is more relevant for this discussion is to explore some of the consequences of this selected colourblind framework on types of knowledge that are produced and on the kinds of problems and issues that remain unanswered and underdeveloped. Although many migration scholars are largely critical of anti-immigrant discourse, but the delegitimation of race critical paradigms and the denial of relevance of racism to analyse migration-related issues, have left few concepts and frameworks to work with (Essed & Nimako, 2006). For example, there is not enough effort and clarity to analyse and contextualise “which anti-immigrant sentiments and policies are historically rooted in the invention of race and the Other, and which of them are fears, discomforts and insecurities resulting from the uncontrollable paradigms of globalisation” (Essed & Nimako, 2006, p. 309).

In this last section, let us look at the intersections of race and capital as an example of what could be gained if we do take into account some of the lessons learned from Critical Race Studies and Postcolonial Studies in our accounts of migration.

9.3 Migrant (Cheap) Labour and Relations of Race and Capital

One of the histories that often goes unaccounted for is the longstanding intersection of race and labour. More specifically, I refer here to the body of work that retraces the complexities of the historical ways in which capital and race are globally intertwined to produce cheap labour, from the colonial times till present. This body of work has been regarded as irrelevant to the recent studies of migrant labour governance and control (Schinkel, 2018, p. 13; Hall, 1980; Solomos et al., 1982). Although some critical scholars inside the field of migration studies started to point out how the overall picture drawn by the field, misses the connections between the histories of contemporary migration to global trade, finance and history of contemporary European infrastructure (Anderson, 2019). They point out the impossibility of studying the movement of people “as unattached to other economic, social and political processes” (Anderson & Dahinden, 2021, p. 38).

As Robinson showed already in 1983, it is hard to find a time in modern European history that migratory and/or immigrant labour “was not a significant aspect of European economies” (Robinson, 1983, p. 23). He attributed the responsibility of lack of attention to the ties between migration and political economy as a consequence of a failure of historical investigation due to theorisations and conceptualisations that looked too closely to the national containers as a separate social, historical

and economic category (Robinson, 1983). He mentions for example the persistent reference to national labour pools (e.g. “the English working class”), a formulation that ignores the colonial global economy (Bhambra, 2021), and its racialised dynamics to provide cheap labour force through exploitation. These dynamics are not only matters of historical interest. Sara Farris (2017), in her account of *femona-tionalism*, dissects an unholy coalition between right-wing nationalist political parties, neoliberal policy-makers, and some feminists and femocrats in contemporary France, Italy, and the Netherlands. She exposes the creation of a reserve army of cheap labour, by encouraging migrant women in taking jobs as housekeepers and care givers in their host countries, in the name of achieving emancipation through financial independence. Through neoliberal civic integration politics, this enterprise serves an economic function to answer the increasing demands on reproductive labour, needed by gender segregated domestic and caregiving industries, which have been deserted by middle-class European working women (Farris, 2017). The French tradition of studies of working class and immigrants have also taken into account the relationship between migrations and cheap labour even though some did not write within the orbit of the field of migration studies (see the works of Abdelmalek Sayad).

The ties between migration and labour is not only a matter of relevance to colonial empires. The Swiss example is telling in this regard. Migration Studies in that context focus on the regulation of mobilities after the emergence of nation states, as mainly a nationalised mobility regime, in the Swiss case starting already before WWI and particularly after WWII (see the works of Andreas Wimmer). One particular subject of the studies of this mobility regulation was the so-called problem of seasonal workers coming to Switzerland from Italy and Spain. While the common narrative in the Swiss case is that the problem started with the seasonal workers arriving with their families and ending up staying in Switzerland, another story got much less attention (Espahangizi, 2021). The fact that in the Europe of after war, there was a ferocious competition for labour force, and that the rotating/seasonal model of workforce created inefficient frictional losses that the Swiss market could not afford (Espahangizi, 2019). While the majority of studies focuses on the rhetoric of over-foreignisation (*Überfremdung*), in terms of cultural (in)compatibility and the questions of identity and nationalism as mentioned above, the economic underpinnings of a cheap workforce is a much-less told story. A story that was already tainted with the colonial imaginations of *Self* and *Other* towards the Southern Italians (Maiolino, 2010), and increasingly got expanded and elaborated towards other migrant workers coming from extra-European countries during the following years. The so-called new immigrant integration process was eventually being perceived, measured and evaluated against labour migration and a “colour-blind” yardstick based on the category of nationality (Espahangizi, 2019, p. 50). However interestingly the notion of *Überfremdung* was first articulated in a brochure produced by Carl Alfred Schmid in 1900, an employee of a welfare institution that provided “relief for the poor” in the canton of Zurich. It drew attention to the alleged social costs of increasing numbers of foreigners entering Switzerland and to the threat that these migrants purportedly pose to national cohesion, but not only costs

in terms of cultural aspects but also economic costs in the context of a developing welfare system (Skenderovic, 2003).

In fact, the intricacies of race and capital which takes roots in colonial plantations and slavery to provide cheap labour, impacts the European histories in other ways as well. This is the close link between colonial undertakings of European countries and the parallel development of welfare systems at home. In the example of the British Welfare State, Bhambra's account of relations of extraction and relations of redistribution explores another untold story of the construction of the welfare states in European metropolises (2022). The analysis of the British context is full of relevant case studies that show how the creation of a welfare state at home, in the 1950s British democracy for example, depended on "invisible donations from tea-pickers in Ceylon, rubber-tappers in Malaya, goldminers in South Africa, copperminers in Rhodesia, the oil of Iraq and especially Iran" (Drayton, 2012, p. 162). But these examples are usually dismissed in the name of the specific and/or different national contexts within Europe.

Such race-less accounts of migration-related issues can be the outcome of "a culturalization of politics" that invokes "cultural rather than socio-economic or political frames such as inequality, exploitation or injustice [...] to describe, analyze, argue, justify, and theorize" different public problems and required actions to counter them (Lentin, 2014, p. 1271). As Lentin has argued, problems involving migrants "have been overwhelmingly regarded as cultural" in nature, resulting from "permissive multiculturalism and excessive ethno-racial diversity" rather than originating in "political, economic or social [situations]—for example as responses to the effects of deindustrialization, foreign policy or institutionalized discrimination" (2014, p. 1271). Against which populist and right-wing framing of immigrants as problem seems to be the easiest way out. What is at stake is "the ideological frame" that this race-blindness lays across "the field of social vision" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 29). The fact that they create a history-less Europe, which denies how much colonialism and racism has to do with the making of Europe and its nation states (Goldberg, 2006, p. 336). When critical race and postcolonial studies are put aside from the analysis of the governance of migrants, the studies of migration fail to understand the relationality of the construction of Europe and its nation states. They fail to take into account how much "modern and contemporary Europe has been made by its colonial experiences, how deeply instrumentalities of the Holocaust such as concentration camps were products of colonial experimentation, how notions such as racial hygiene can be traced to racially predicated urban planning around sanitation syndromes by colonial regimes" (Goldberg, 2006, p. 336), to name only a few.

9.4 Conclusion: Racism in/Through Migration Studies Is More than a ‘Reflexivity’ Issue

The denial of racism and colonial relationality necessary to the construction of the idea of Europe is to forget how white and those deemed non-white inhabitants of the colonies were formally and informally categorised as “Europeans” and “non-Europeans” in bureaucratic and popular discourse (Goldberg, 2006). This forgetfulness makes our analysis of what is happening to those who are cast out as immigrants in Europe, at best flawed and at worst a complicit of racist and neocolonial—but, of course, policy-relevant—accounts of migration in Europe.

In his essay on “racial Europeanisation”, Goldberg has astutely put it: “Europe begins to exemplify what happens when no category is available to name a set of experiences that are linked in their production or at least inflection, historically and symbolically, experientially and politically, to racial arrangements and engagements” (2006, p. 335). However, as Balibar among others (1991) has argued, the erasure of racial language did not lead to the eradication of racist thought. Despite these attempts to question the biological determinism underlying the concept of race, racism endured. El-Tayeb (2011) has characterised this outcome as a peculiar form of “raceless racism” that while unspoken and invisible was far from being neutralised in post-war Western continental Europe (El-Tayeb, 2011).

This historical amnesia silences the colonial legacy relevant to understanding the mechanisms through which the presence of black and brown bodies in Britain, for example, became constructed ideologically as a national problem, thereby rendering them subject to specific and intense forms of control and repression (Solomos et al., 1982, p. 21). It denies the reverberations of race and racial taxonomies in contemporary European systems of crime and migration controls (Bosworth et al., 2008). This colonial legacy also plays a part in the refusal of granting the same rights and basic life-saving protection to immigrants, and refugees, who are bodily marked as others and deemed culturally inferior, and consequently less deserving or even undeserving of life. This cannot be understood if one only mobilises the usual conceptual kernel of mainstream migrations studies which overwhelmingly avoid the use of the terms race and racism, and without referring to the above-discussed literature in their analysis of contemporary treatments of immigrants in Europe.

In response to this, recent calls are being heard about the necessity of bringing Critical Race Studies and Postcolonial Studies in. Anderson’s suggestion that “once migration is no longer at the border, it becomes ‘race’” (2019, p. 8) is an attempt to show how in many European states immigrant identifications are typically related to race as a marker of national belonging, and how national membership is traced through ancestry and nationality which in fact is tied to race (Anderson & Dahinden, 2021, p. 38). Mongia also discusses the fact that “a blurring of the vocabularies of nationality and race is a founding strategy of the modern nation-state that makes it impossible to inquire into the modern state without attending to its creation in a global context of colonialism and racism” (2018, p. 113).

In conclusion, while one should salute the increasing calls that advocate for taking into account the wealth of knowledge on racism and colonialism in the studies of migration-related issues (see again Dieterich and Nieswand, Chap. 5, in this volume for possible paths to do so), I would like to argue that this is a more important matter, than merely a reflexivity issue. To provide accounts of migration that are not complicit in (re)production and (re)enforcement of a racial order of things, there is a need to go beyond methodological discussions of reflexivity. When postpositivist approaches advocated for reflexivity that cautioned against the pretence of neutrality in knowledge production (Harding, 1986), it was mainly the conventional standards of what is considered “good science”, namely neutrality and objectivity that were interrogated (Harding & Norberg, 2005). The reflexivity advocates argued that such standards were intended to generate impartial research through the researchers’ quest to distance themselves of any personal value, seen as bias, while actually only hiding the researcher’s positionality (Harding & Norberg, 2005). Whereas through the pretence of producing objective and neutral knowledge, scholars have in reality produced knowledge that is situated in a position that they were unaware of (Haraway, 1988). Consequently, a wide range of themes, subjects, and lives have not been tackled within academic knowledge production, one example being the lives and experiences of women, and another being those of racialised minorities.

Consequently, the main idea behind reflexivity in this sense was acknowledging researchers’ standpoints and the places from where they see, think, and practise research (Harding, 1991). Whereas the question of taking racism and colonialism into account is a call to be aware of the relationships between knowledge and power. It is a call for attentiveness to the power differences in the research processes themselves “in terms of who defines the research project. Who defines what counts as a problematic situation? Whose concepts, questions, and hypotheses are the focus of research? Whose theories and methods of producing knowledge are favoured?” (Harding & Norberg, 2005). Situated within the field of critical studies in general, these research projects prioritise “studying the powerful, their institutions, policies, and practices instead of focusing only on those whom the powerful govern” (Harding & Norberg, 2005). This kind of research project targets social policies, sometimes directly, and is aimed at the deployment of the power of science on behalf of disadvantaged groups (Harding & Norberg, 2005). It is only by being mindful of the political consequences, receptions and usage of the knowledge we produce and the concepts we use that we can avoid the risk of being co-opted by political agendas to reproduce neocolonial and racist social structures and narratives, and to stop using fruitlessly the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house.

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Part III
Concepts and Categorisations

Chapter 10

What Comes After ‘Post-Migration’? On the Biographies of Terms



Jens Schneider

10.1 Introduction

In 2007, the anthropologist Levent Soysal, having been invited as one of the keynote speakers to a PhD-summer school in Amsterdam dedicated to migration studies, puzzled students and colleagues with the title of his speech: “The End of Migration”. Soysal argued that ‘migration’ in Europe continued to be conceived as people leaving one country to arrive in another country where they were subsequently ‘integrated’ into the container-like national social system. According to Soysal, this applied also to large parts of migration and integration research and overlooked the interrelatedness between ‘migration’ and all kinds of mobility (for example that of students, tourists) and also of today’s intensive connections across borders and continents via social media.¹

Obviously, the process of migration has not come to an ‘end’—as it has never ‘started’. The point that Levent Soysal made almost a decade and a half ago is still valid² or even more so than ever, if we consider the sharp increase in the number of individuals who are confronted with long periods of in-between status (e.g. being held in refugee camps or certain border zones) and transnational migration

¹ This is, of course, one of the main departure points of the theory of transnationalism; see Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Waters & Levitt, 2006; Vertovec, 2009.

² He iterated this argument in 2015 on a panel on “Ethnography and the Study of Diversity in Germany” at the 39th Annual Conference of the German Studies Association (GSA) (see the panel report of Deniz Göktürk on <https://mgp.berkeley.edu/2015/10/22/the-end-of-migration-as-we-knew-it>; all featured links in this chapter were retrieved last time on January 7, 2025).

J. Schneider (✉)
Universität Osnabrück, Osnabrück, Germany
e-mail: jens.schneider@uni-osnabrueck.de

trajectories that not infrequently involve being on the move for years. The relevance of globalised chains of production, trade and transport that lead to more and more people in temporary work situations without any rights and protection has also widely escaped the focus of migration research. Similar to Soysal, Janine Dahinden criticised the continuing nation-state centeredness of migration research and the underlying discourses about migration and, especially, the problematic discourse about ‘migrants’ (Dahinden, 2016; see also Chaps. 2 and 9 of Jashari and Khazaei in this volume).

Yet, as the two examples show, the problem is not only one of focus, but also of terminology: Soysal and Dahinden both question *the term* ‘migration’ in specific contexts because of its normative and normalising connotations and usages. Terminology is a centrepiece of knowledge production: phenomena have to be *named* to become ‘tangible’ and cognitively processed (or even to get noticed!).³ Yet, terms are never just denominations for something: they have a history—a ‘biography’ and genealogy—and they are contextually embedded (in the broadest possible sense of the word). Terms are thus never just ‘neutral’ or simply an ‘objective reflection’ of what they are meant to denominate, but prefigure debates and thinking about the phenomena at stake. This is why debates about and around terms and terminologies (should) lie at the very heart of any academic knowledge production.⁴

Unfortunately, this is by far not always or probably not even regularly the case, and migration studies have not been exempt from this: Such terms as ‘assimilation’, ‘integration’, ‘segregation’ or ‘culture’ and ‘acculturation’ etc. are so well established that their understanding seems to represent a kind of ‘common ground’ that would not require further scrutiny.⁵ In consequence, articles and books published in the field very frequently do not take the time and space to reflect on their specific usages and, especially, the actual *heuristic value* of these terminologies for their specific focus and research interest (cf. J. Schneider & Crul, 2010). Migration scholars even less regularly reflect on the normative charges in the usages of terms and terminologies which frequently result from the entanglement and ‘feedback loops’ between research and the public, political and media interest in migration-related issues.⁶ Thus, studying ‘migration’ means making use of a specific frame of

³Cf. Berger & Luckmann, 2011; Fairclough, 1992, p. 209f.

⁴The question of terminology becomes even more complex when we consider that terms often have different contexts, connotations, and even meanings in other languages (see Chap. 8 of Camille Schmoll in this volume).

⁵As Crul and Lelie point out in Chap. 11 to this book, one important result of this was to widely overlook people of non-migrant descent in the study of neighbourhoods that are strongly influenced by migration—although they generally still represent the largest group and obviously (have to) add their share to social interactions and cohesion in these neighborhoods. This is especially striking in the use of the concept of ‘segregation’, by default rather applied to highly heterogeneous city areas than to much more homogeneously ‘white’ (upper) middle-class areas.

⁶A good example for this is the social and political ‘career’ of the term *migration background* in Germany (and beyond) from a newly introduced item in population statistics to the most salient discursive representation of the ‘migrant Other’, cf. Mannitz and J. Schneider (2014). At the same

interpretation in which, among other aspects, a special emphasis is put on (a) the (unidirectional) crossing of *national* borders, and (b) the distinction from terms such as 'mobility', 'expats' or 'tourism' which takes certain, mostly socially higher-ranked types of border crossings out of the semantic field around 'migration'.

When looking at a society whose demography is significantly shaped by immigration, the term 'migration' also makes us overlook the long-term and intergenerational effects of people moving somewhere else and settling there, at least, for a prolonged period of time. One of the most interesting terminological challenges in the field of migration studies has been dealing with those parts of the population who are not 'migrants', but whose connectedness to 'migration' is still relevant for research and for their social position in society—individuals, who were raised from an early age in neighbourhoods, cities and countries as children of 'foreign-born' parents. There has been a long-standing interest also in the children of immigrants since the early 1980s, with a particular focus on education, but around the turn of the century in migration studies in Europe, a new wave of research and literature developed on the grown-up 'second generation', conceived of, for the first time, as being part of the 'native-born', local population, with their local feelings of belonging, their own families and professional careers.⁷ This happened at approximately the same time as young intellectuals and cultural producers from this 'group' began to prominently conquer the public stage. In the academic field, the term second generation was widely adopted, placing the main focus on the descent from an immigrated family. Much of the literature has even used the oxymoron-like expression 'second generation migrants' (cf. J. Schneider, 2016). To focus on this aspect is not to be criticised *per se*, but it misses out on an important part of the story: (a) at the individual level, that of being *native* to the place of childhood socialisation and its sense of home and belonging to this place, and (b) the effects on the society at-large, in the sense of contributing to increasing diversity, hybridity and making this more and more mainstream.⁸

This second aspect is also the main point of discussion when we look at the debate *outside* academia. For the first second generation protagonists here, especially in the field of cultural production, the struggle for self-representation had two distinct goals, those of claiming belonging to the mainstream and of underlying their difference to their immigrant ancestors. "Newest German literature" published

time, the introduction of this statistical category in Germany in the early 2000s also fundamentally changed the social perception of 'migration' in society, not least because moving statistically from 'foreigners' to 'migrant background' meant that the noted share in the population more than doubled (cf. Will, 2016, p. 22).

⁷See Crul and Vermeulen (2003); Thomson and Crul (2007). Cf. Portes and Zhou (1993) and Kasinitz et al. (2008) for the earlier U.S.-debate. For a most recent comparative analysis of high-end professional careers in the second generation across Europe see J. Schneider et al., 2022.

⁸Cf. Crul, 2016. Only in Switzerland, the self-denomination 'secondos'—taking reference to growing visibility of young people of, mainly, Italian descent—was relevant for some years in the political mobilisation of native-born young people from migrant families (cf. Wessendorf, 2014). See also Chap. 15 of Andrikopoulos on the shortcomings of research on migrant families in this volume.

in 2000 by Jamal Tuschik was, for example, the subtitle of the first anthology of literary production among this new generation with diverse linguistic and cultural family roots in Germany. This emphasis on representing a *new* part of the mainstream still continues today with, for example, the ‘New German Media Makers’ being one of the most influential political and lobbying organisations for more diverse media production, and the ‘New German Organisations’ representing an umbrella for more than 130 organisations of most diverse backgrounds and orientation:

The ndo [new German organisations; J.S.] are a nationwide network of over 200 associations, organisations and projects. Our members are descendants of migrant workers and refugees, Sintizze and Rom*nja, Afrodiasporic persons, Jewish, Muslim and other people engaged in dialogue. Some of us call ourselves Person of Color (PoC) or Black People, Hyphenated German or anything else. Our common ground: We see ourselves as a *post-migrant* movement against racism and for an inclusive Germany.⁹

Indeed, this ‘terminological field’ is influenced and ‘produced’ at the junction of academia, activism, politics and cultural production. The term (and concept) ‘New German’ has not made it either into the wider political and media discourse or into academia (cf. Foroutan, 2015), but the emphasised term ‘post-migrant’ in the quote above did: There are an entry in German Wikipedia on *postmigrantische Gesellschaft* (‘post-migrant society’) and a specialised online-dossier of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) on the topic.¹⁰ In the German-speaking academic world, student papers and master theses regularly use the term; the Council for Migration, a policy-oriented association of German migration scholars, has a section dedicated to ‘Post-migrant Society’, and the publishing house *transcript* specialising in social and cultural sciences, has started a series called *Postmigrantische Studien*, listing more than twenty books.¹¹ Although most of the scholars and publications still come from Germany and Austria, the academic debate around the term also in Switzerland (cf. Espahangizi, 2016), Denmark, Sweden, France and the UK (see Gaonkar et al. (2021, p. 11) for references by country) has had repercussions.

The following sections try to retrace the ‘biography’ of the term ‘post-migrant’, that is its origins, re-emergence, and current career, linking it with the corresponding protagonists, and discussing its potential for fertilising the debate and new insights in migration studies. As a whole, the chapter is also meant as to be an example for how discussing terminology can and should be part of reflexivity in the wider academic debate.

⁹Source: <https://www.neue-deutsche-organisationen.de/ueber-uns> (emphasis added; if not differently stated, all quotes are translated from German by the author). It should be highlighted here that the concept of ‘new Germanness’ explicitly includes persons of non-immigrant family background who share the appreciation of diversity-orientation in journalism (see <https://neuemedienmacher.de>) and other social and professional fields (cf. Foroutan, 2010; see also Bota et al., 2012).

¹⁰<https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/kurzdossiers/205183/integration-in-der-post-migrantischen-gesellschaft>

¹¹<https://rat-fuer-migration.de/sektionen/postmigrantische-gesellschaft/>; <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/reihen/soziologie/postmigrantische-studien/>

10.2 The Career of a Term

The historiography of the term widely agrees in crediting the beginning of its current career to the cultural producer and theatre maker Shermin Langhoff when in 2008 she opened the independent theatre production house *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* in Berlin with a “young post-migrant theatre festival” called “Dogland”.¹² Langhoff was born in Bursa on the Turkish west coast as Şermin Özel and moved to Germany at the age of 9, following her mother who was working in Nuremberg. Having completed her training as a publishing house clerk she met her long-term artistic companion, the filmmaker Tunçay Kulaoğlu with whom she organised the first Turkish German Film Festival in Nuremberg in the early 1990s. They also founded the intercultural artists’ network and agency *Kultursprünge e.V.* (“Culture Leaps”) which was predominantly oriented towards the film and TV industry. After moving to Berlin, Langhoff was invited in 2006 by Mathias Lilienthal who was the director of the theatre production house *Hebbel am Ufer (HAU)*, to curate a festival for Turkish-German theatre productions called *Beyond Belonging - Migration*². The festival stated the aim at going “beyond the currently dominant integration discourse and constructed belonging, and the daily racism of so often being reduced to ‘origin’ in parts of the culture and media industry” (festival program¹³). Similar to Tuschik’s literary anthology mentioned above, a main purpose of the festival was to show that there were ‘Turkish’ cultural productions and narratives different from the ones that had described the lives (and traumas) of the immigrant generation from Turkey. Langhoff explained, retrospectively in a press interview a few years later that...

Aesthetically speaking, the old migrant cultural productions were associated with films such as Tevfik Başer’s “40sqm Germany” or Helga Sander-Brahms’ “Shirin’s Wedding”. They were narratives concerned with the arrival in a new environment and about the trauma of migration. For the second and third generation, however, a lot of questions are posed differently today and some issues are partly overcome. The films of Fatih Akin developed new narratives that affect audiences universally and transculturally. Therefore, it seems plausible to me that we define and refer to the narratives of the second and third generation differently. They exist in a context of migration, but are told by those who haven’t actually migrated themselves.¹⁴

The *Ballhaus Naunynstraße*-theatre is located in Kreuzberg which was known in pre-unification West Berlin for the presence of Turkish immigrants, its ‘alternative’ left-oriented political scene and its off-mainstream cultural productions. Under the header of ‘post-migrant theatre’ it became a game-changer in the German theatre world, appearing as a perfectly-timed response to the blatant, almost complete

¹²<https://ballhausnaunynstrasse.de/play/dogland>; Terkessidis (2015, p. 91f.); cf. e.g. Espahangizi (2016); Stewart (2017).

¹³http://www.archiv.hebbel-am-ufer.de/media/Beyond_Belonging01.pdf

¹⁴<https://taz.de/!674193>; the English translation is taken from Onur Kömürçü-Nobrega (2014, p. 14f.). Gaonkar et al. (2021, p. 17) presume that Langhoff may have been inspired by a conference titled “Turkish-German Post-Migration Culture” in 1998 at which also Feridun Zaimoğlu participated.

absence of actors and directors of migrant backgrounds in general in the mainstream theatre production system—4 years after the young Turkish-German film director, Fatih Akin had already demonstrated this overlooked potential in the field by winning the ‘Golden Bear’ at the Berlin Film Festival for his film “Head On” (German original title: “Gegen die Wand”) and becoming one of Germany’s worldwide best-known, contemporary filmmakers.¹⁵ Despite its explicit emphasis on discovering artistic talents who had been overlooked by the prestigious public theatre academies that provide the state theatre-system with its ‘new blood’, *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* became an artistic and cultural-political reference point far beyond the local performing art scene in Berlin, featuring Fatih Akin as patron of the “Dogland”-Festival that represented the starting-point of the theatre and also the well-known author and playwright, Feridun Zaimoğlu. One of the plays written for *Ballhaus Naunynstraße*—“Verrücktes Blut” (“Crazy Blood”) written by Nurkan Erpulat and Jens Hillje—was elected ‘Play of the Year’ in 2011 and has advanced to being a very frequently played contemporary comedy/drama in German theatres, particularly when a play on diversity is called for on stage. As a result, in 2013, i.e. only 5 years after the founding of the theatre in Kreuzberg, Langhoff was invited to become director of the public *Maxim-Gorki-Theater* in order to bring the concept of ‘post-migrant theatre’ from the former city margins of West Berlin ‘next to the Wall’ to the very centre of unified Berlin and into one of its most representative old buildings, next to Humboldt-University, the State Opera and the German Historic Museum.

The success of ‘post-migrant theatre’ in the German theatre landscape is ran parallel to the career of the term ‘post-migration’ in academia. When entering the term *postmigrant** into the catalogue search machine of the Hamburg University library, more than 100 books appear that have the term in the title, most of them having been written in German and published after 2009. We can see three lines of scholarship around the term, which could be called the ‘Berlin School’ around Naika Foroutan, sociologist at Humboldt-University, the ‘Innsbruck School’ around Erol Yıldız and Marc Hill from the local Institute for Educational Science, and a third line in the humanities that mainly focuses on the performing arts. One of its major protagonists in Germany is Azadeh Sharifi of the LMU in Munich.¹⁶

Naika Foroutan clearly credits Shermin Langhoff with the origin of the term. In an interview which took place for the Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation, the interviewer congratulated Foroutan on the widespread increase of the use of the term ‘post-migrant society’:

The congratulations should go to Shermin Langhoff who introduced the term as a subversive, ironic counter-sketch out of her artistic work to make clear that Germany does not consist of the groups ‘migrants’ and ‘non-migrants’, but of many groups and persons

¹⁵The film was actually produced with the participation of Shermin Langhoff’s agency *Kultursprünge e.V.*

¹⁶This distinction into three ‘schools’ is meant here as a ‘heuristic device’ or ‘tool’ for analytical purposes. As the following description will show, there are, of course, many interconnections between the protagonists and overlaps between their concepts.

building on each other, running side by side or positioning themselves against each other. We transferred the term to the social sciences and are trying to operationalise it. (in Piening, 2018, p. 19)

Curiously enough, the first—and most cited—publication of Foroutan which uses the term 'post-migrant' is not an academic article or book, but a contribution to the political science supplement APuZ of the weekly paper "Das Parlament", published in 2010 by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb). In this article, she discusses the problems of denomination and terminology when referring to the new German demographic realities in reaction to a wide and fierce debate in that same year around the bestselling book "Deutschland schafft sich ab" ("Germany abolishes itself") by the former social-democrat minister of finance in Berlin, Thilo Sarrazin (see Foroutan, 2010, p. 15). The article uses the term 'post-migrant', but does not define it: the statement "the one third of post-migrants who are recorded by the micro-census as people without their own migration experience" (ibid., p. 11) suggests that it is not limited to members of the second and subsequent generations, but it is only for the latter that a "pluri-cultural self-understanding without forgetting about one's roots" and "a post-integrative perspective" (ibid.) are stated. In later publications, Foroutan and colleagues take more effort in defining the concept, but the focus is not on individuals any longer, but applies to the society as a whole. The Humboldt-University research project JUNITED¹⁷ adds the term *postmigrantisch* to all its publication titles and defines it as follows:

The term post-migrant chosen for the title series stands here for the negotiation processes that take place in municipalities, cities, regions and federal states in Germany after migration has been recognised as a political reality. Post-migrant does not stand for a process of completed migration, but for an analytical perspective that deals with the conflicts, identity formation processes, social and political transformations that begin after migration has taken place. (Foroutan et al., 2014, p. 16)

The JUNITED-project basically represents a nationwide survey on views on Muslims and their role for German national self-definitions in the wider population, *after* decades of immigration and Muslims had become a sizeable part of the resident population. Foroutan published another article a year later, still not in an academic journal, but for the above mentioned political education online-dossier, that describes societies as 'post-migrant' when there is a general political recognition of the basically heterogeneous character of the social structure to which immigration and emigration have strongly contributed and which cannot be reversed (Foroutan, 2015). According to her, this general recognition should not be understood as a political consensus. On the contrary, it would be a typical characteristic of post-migrant societies that there are polarised discussions about belonging, (national) identity, immigration and the rights of participation (Foroutan, 2016). In the above mentioned interview, she finally specified the 'post' in the term (a) as an empirical temporal *after* migration has had specific transformative effects on society, (b) as an analytical looking *behind* the mechanisms that make 'migration' such a constant

¹⁷<https://www.projekte.hu-berlin.de/de/junited>

‘hot topic’ in political debates, and (c) as a political demand of going *beyond* the dichotomies of ‘migrants vs. non-migrants’ and establishing rules that effectively overcome processes of Othering and exclusion (Piening, 2018, p. 20). Also in 2018, the ‘Berlin School’ published a first comprehensive academic collection of articles that discussed different aspects of “critical knowledge production on the post-migrant society”, as the title of the introductory chapter states (Foroutan et al., 2018).

The main protagonist of the ‘Innsbruck School’ is Erol Yıldız, who also had his first publication in 2010 with the article “The opening of local places to the world and post-migrant life strategies” in the Austrian social science journal *SWS-Rundschau* (Yıldız, 2010). In contrast to Foroutan, Yıldız’ focus parts from a qualitative empirical study on “young migrants of the second and third generation” in diverse urban settings, in this case a suburban *banlieue*-like area of Cologne, and their stories and narratives in which different cultural elements are combined to “hybrid sketches of their lives” (*hybride Lebensentwürfe*). It is this hybridity and the combination of a strong sense of local belonging with different migration- or origin-related life experiences, ranging from parental influences to experiences of discrimination and racism, that make them ‘post-migrant’ in Yıldız’ observations:

The life reality of post-migrant groups shows that they know how to deal creatively and subversively with the ethnic sorting, attributed to them from the outside, in a creative and subversive way. In this way, they create a cosmopolitan everyday practice that transcends ethnic and national boundaries and is equally characterised by locality and globality. (...) Also the so-called culture of origin is being reinvented by these post-migrant groups as they create their own imaginary spaces of reference. (ibid., p. 329)

Yıldız traces his use of the term back to another reference than the ‘Berlin School’: the term itself appears probably first in the mid-1990s in the title of the book “Post-Migration Ethnicity”, edited by Gerd Baumann and Thijl Sunier in Amsterdam (Baumann & Sunier, 1995). The book represents a collection of on the whole quite conventional studies on ethnic self-identifications among immigrants and their offspring in the Netherlands, Germany and London, that understand ‘post’ literally as *after* migrating and the moment that immigrants having finally settled. Yıldız’ main theoretical reference point, however, is postcolonial studies, i.e. the idea to “liberate the historiography of colonialism from Western hegemony and to think the historical developments new and differently. [...] In other words: colonial history is told from the perspective and experience of the colonised” and by this breaking with the established *grand narratives* (Yıldız, 2015, p. 19). In this regard, his understanding of the concept of ‘post-migrant’ is closer to Shermin Langhoff’s idea and her self-stated influences from Anglo-American literary studies (see footnote 12) than the quantitative take chosen by Foroutan and colleagues. Together with his colleague Marc Hill from Innsbruck in an edited volume (Yıldız & Hill, 2015), Yıldız highlights three “dimensions of post-migrant perspectives”: (a) a new narration of the history of migration of the so-called ‘guest workers’ as ‘pioneers of transnationalisation’, (b) the positioning strategies and self-denominations of the second and subsequent generations, and (c) a shift in the analytical perspectives of migration studies away from ‘migration’ as a research topic to migration as a *perspective* for the analysis of society as a whole, understanding it as profoundly formed by

diversification and mobility processes. For Yıldız this also entails a “resistant” practice of knowledge production that “irritates” and criticises standard narratives and thinking in categories of ‘difference’.¹⁸

In the same year 2018 as the ‘Berlin School’, Marc Hill and Erol Yıldız from Innsbruck University published another collected volume with a diverse range of contributions. Interestingly, both books were not only published in the same year and came with very similar titles— “Postmigrantische Visionen” (Hill & Yıldız, 2018) and “Postmigrantische Perspektiven” (Foroutan et al., 2018), but also feature contributions from the respective other ‘school’, such as an introductory chapter by Erol Yıldız for the Berlin-volume and invited chapters by e.g. Naika Foroutan and Regina Römhild from Humboldt-University in the Innsbruck-book. Thus, despite a different academic tracing of the origins and different methodological approaches, both ‘schools’ refer to the same wider historical and societal context: the new public presence of ‘post-migrant cultural productions’, such as Akin’s films, Zaimoğlu’s books, and Langhoff’s theatre, and also the roots of the new ‘post-migration’-movement in the cultural and artistic sector (cf. Espahangizi, 2016), reflected, for example, in featuring an afterword by Shermin Langhoff in the Berlin-book and several chapters by artists and an architect in the Innsbruck-volume. The main difference between the two volumes lies in the specific Austrian perspective that the Hill & Yıldız-book brings into the debate and a stronger orientation towards empirical research on young people and artistic productions in diverse urban settings, while the Berlin-book aims to be more conceptual and theory-oriented.

Finally, the ‘humanities-line’ of knowledge production stays close to the origin of the term in theatre production and consequently has less explanatory problems with the prefix ‘post’. As Azadeh Sharifi in her first article in 2011 to a collected volume on *Theater und Migration* (W. Schneider, 2011) explains, Shermin Langhoff’s primary intention in using the term ‘post-migrant’ to characterise her cultural production was to move beyond what was called “migrant theatre”, which had been concerned with i.e. theatre productions of groups of mainly “guest worker”-immigrants since the 1960s and 70s (Sharifi, 2011, p. 36f.). Langhoff and her colleagues were part of a “post-migrant artistic search movement” (*Suchbewegung*) (Ballhaus Naunynstraße; cited in Sharifi, 2011, p. 37) for what identity can mean for the generation of native-born children of immigrants between family origins and local belonging; they feel German, yet they are constantly Othered and ‘foreignised’ in public and everyday discourse, and they are not affected by the traumas of leaving home and arriving and trying to survive in a foreign and frequently rather hostile new environment, but feel committed to the efforts and hardships their parents had to endure (J. Schneider et al., 2012; Siouti et al., 2022). The stories and narratives brought on stage by these new protagonists were new and different from what mainstream theatre told, yet they were still *German*

¹⁸See also the editorial by Hill and Yıldız to the above mentioned book series at transcript at <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/reihen/soziologie/postmigrantische-studien/?p=1>

stories, or even universal ones.¹⁹ Because of this ambition and perspective, ‘post-migrant theatre’ soon developed into a “cultural political challenge” (ibid., p. 42) to mainstream cultural production: the obligation to bring the new hybrid and diverse urban social reality on stage could not be limited to cultural producers of immigrant family origins.²⁰ The term and concept of ‘post-migrant theatre’ was intended to be an intermediate step out of the niche of “migrant theatre”, demonstrating the widely overlooked artistic potential of this new German diversity, just as Tuschik et al. had formulated for their literature (see above; see also Hodaie & Hofmann, 2024; Sievers, 2024). In this aspect, the previously described two schools are less clear as regards to whether the term ‘post-migrant’ applies to individuals of non-migrant family origins, or only to the extent that shifting the emphasis from ‘post-migrants’ to ‘post-migrant *society*’, takes the society as a whole in focus.

10.3 International Repercussions

The ‘humanities-line’ of knowledge production is the field in which the term ‘post-migration’ and the debates around it have found most repercussions in academia outside the German-speaking world. Coming from an intellectual tradition that is rooted in post-colonial studies and the anti-racism advocacy of Stuart Hall and other scholars, international Cultural Studies have had a long-term interest also in immigrant and second generation literature in Germany, analysing the works of authors like Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Feridun Zaimoğlu, Rafik Shami and many others since the mid-1990s (cf. Cobbs, 2006; Vlasta, 2016). The public attention around Langhoff’s ‘post-migrant theatre’ was closely followed by this line of scholarship especially in the UK and Scandinavia and the notion of ‘post-migration’ was taken up to address questions of belonging and participation not only in the German cultural sector.²¹ In a relatively recent collected volume, Gaonkar et al. (2021) unite scholars from several countries (including a number of the main German protagonists) and a diverse range of disciplinary interests. Trying to bring together the several ‘lineages’ of origin, the editors introduce a differentiation between ‘post-migration’—written with a hyphen—to refer to the earlier usages of the term in the literature of the 1990s in connection with Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘new

¹⁹ Many of Fatih Akın’s films, for example, are situated in a specific Turkish German milieu, but their themes are not milieu-specific, but rather tell ‘universal stories’.

²⁰ In fact, in the same year 2011, the German Dramaturgical Society titled its annual conference “Who is Us? Theatre in the Intercultural Society” and observed a striking lack of cultural diversity as much in the programming as in the personnel of public theatres in Germany (ibid., p. 43; cf. <https://dramaturgische-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Jahreskonferenz-Freiburg-2011-Programm.pdf>)

²¹ See e.g. the research project “Academia and cultural production as ‘postmigrant’ fields in Sweden” at Malmö University from 2021 to 2024 (<https://mau.se/en/research/projects/academia-and-cultural-production-as-postmigrant-fields-in-sweden>)

ethnicities' that are developed in the country of arrival *after* immigration (e.g. Baumann & Sunier, 1995; Hall, 1997; Modood, 2011), and 'postmigration'—without a hyphen—for the current scholarship and concept (ibid., p. 14).

Gaonkar and colleagues see a potential in this new terminology beyond the German-speaking context, because they identify a widely overlooked gap between, on the one hand, 'classical' post-colonial theory, especially in the UK and France, that has its origins in the historical experiences of immigration after decolonisation, and on the other hand, the reflection on migrant movements to these countries in the context of post-war labour immigration. This is interesting, also in the light of the strong influence of, especially, British theories on post-colonialism and racism in Germany, Scandinavia and other countries without a similar postcolonial experience after World War II. Gaonkar et al. argue that the discursive and historical context of the rise of this new term 'postmigration' (without a hyphen) suggests its suitability for not only filling the gap between post-colonial theory and European labour migration, but also for making a connection to the growing number and presence of cultural productions (and intellectual self-positionings) of protagonists of diverse and 'hybrid' backgrounds that emphasise (a) the full and unquestioned belonging to the place and society where they were raised and socialised into, and (b) the fundamentally hybrid and diverse character of society as a whole that makes *them* the 'new mainstream' and the 'new normal' (cf. Alba & Nee, 2003; Wessendorf, 2014; Crul, 2016; J. Schneider, 2018).

10.4 Criticism

While the new term seems to enjoy growing popularity in academia, some migration scholars who have been in field for a while, do not share the enthusiasm. According to them, terms like 'migration society' or the even more pronounced 'migration regime' have had the purpose of showing exactly that 'migration' was not to be understood as an isolated phenomenon but as an inherent characteristic of modern society and always in the context of wider transformations of the society at-large (cf. Karakayalı & Mecheril, 2021). Paul Mecheril criticised the term 'postmigration' for addressing "the wrong subject": the issue would be neither that "the migrant issue would be empirically finished" nor that "it should be overcome or transformed for good reasons" (2014, p. 108), as the prefix 'post-' and its common usages in other concepts, such as 'post-colonialism' or 'post-fascism' suggest. He completely follows the criticism of common academic and political discourses around 'migration', but...

... I would not call this critique 'postmigrant'. This labelling practice is not only misleading, but also dangerous. Misleading is the suggestion that migrant phenomena would empirically belong rather to a past that is still effective, but has passed; dangerous is the normative message that the migration-related [orig.: *das Migrantische*; J.S.] would be something from which it is advisable to distance oneself. Without assuming a practice of distinction here, in which the cosmopolitan, bourgeois-academic metropostmigrant secretly

declares herself the measure of all things, the danger of a cross-fading seems significant to me. Because the struggle, for example, against the attribution of deficits or the impertinences of integration has always been part of the reality of the migration society—we can also say migrant reality [...]. In the distancing and disengagement of the postmigrant from its unnamed X we can see a repetition of the derogative stand of the symbolic majority that imagines itself as non-migrant versus the dingy migrant. (ibid., p. 111)

Mecheril's intervention highlights the ambiguous potential of the productivity of this and other terms referring to the linguistic 'intrinsic logic' of them.²² Yet, as the historian Dirk Rupnow pointed out, also Stuart Hall's understanding of 'post-colonialism' was thinking less of colonialism as a system of oppression to be left behind, but as a *continuation* of oppression principles that have their roots in colonialism. The post-colonial, according to Hall, is a complex system of ruptures and continuities that produces change, but also continuing long-term effects (Rupnow, 2018, p. 30). Hall's conceptualisation of the term is less normative than describing a social reality; the prefix 'post' thus refers to a *historical* sequence of oppression regimes that also entails a *going beyond* a narrow understanding of 'colonialism' as something entirely from the past. It seems that this ambiguity is inherent to the prefix 'post-', in the sense that this continuation of the central term following it also applies to, for example, 'postmodernism' and 'poststructuralism'. All three terms after the 'post-' refer to something that has ceased to be as dominant as previously—colonial rule, modernity as an unquestioned depiction of progress, or structuralism as the main school of thought especially in Linguistics and Anthropology—but, at the same time, continue to be relevant. In the line of Levent Soysal's argument at the beginning of this chapter, 'post-migration' criticizes the continued dominance of a specific migration- and integration-paradigm that overemphasizes certain movements of people, while *not* putting into question that migration-related experiences and aspects continue to be relevant—even in the biographies of many not particularly mobile individuals.

Rupnow criticises that the 'post-migration' debate scarcely engages in a theoretical discussion with some well-established concepts in critical migration studies that address very similar issues such as Mecheril's 'migration society', but also 'transnationalism' and 'super-diversity' (ibid., p. 34f.; but see Bojadžijev & Römhild, 2014). Moreover, the certain level of conceptual fuzziness that some observe even increases when the perspective changes from *describing* society as it is to *demanding the recognition* of society as it is in the public debate (ibid., p. 33), i.e. oscillating between using the concept as a heuristic tool for empirical research or as a normative stance in the plea for "true plural democracy" (see, especially, Foroutan, 2019).²³

²² Presumably admitting to have lost the fight and trying to reconcile the self-reflexive and critical literature on 'migration' within migration studies with the new terminology, in a more recent article Paul Mecheril and Juliane Karakayalı suggest the term 'post-immigration society' as a more appropriate alternative (Karakayalı & Mecheril, 2021, p. 77).

²³ Probably under the impression of the rise of right-wing populism in Germany and Europe, also in her earlier contributions Naika Foroutan highlights the threats to democracy that lie in the

Finally, Mecheril's critique rightly points to the fact that migration not only never ended (or will end), but should also not be seen as something negative—which the parallel with 'post-colonialism' would suggest. A widely overlooked aspect in the discussion of the term—and, in my view, one of its major weaknesses—is that the "post" in 'post-migration' stems from a specific historical phase which could be framed with Fatih Akın's iconic success at the Berlin Film Festival in 2004 as a sort of beginning, and the 'return of migration' with the massive refugee movement in 2015 as its end. Akın's Golden Bear symbolised a 'normalisation' of migration-induced diversity in society, while Langhoff's 'post-migrant theatre' represented a kind of 'institutionalisation', occurring at a moment of comparatively low attention to new, first-hand immigration to Germany. In this 'historical' perspective, the unsettling debate about Sarrazin's book and the uncovering of widespread bourgeois 'sarrazinist racism' in 2010 can not only be understood as a backlash to this normalisation, but also as a produced wealth of well-pronounced opposition from most diverse backgrounds. The 'long summer of migration' in 2015 ended this phase, in the sense that the new wave of immigration from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries completely refocused the public attention on first-hand immigration and the 'classical' issues of integration again: to provide a reception infrastructure and to open pathways into housing, education and work as the central fields of structural participation (Rupnow, 2018, p. 38).

10.5 'Post-Migrants' or 'Post-Migration'?

It is interesting to note that the protagonists and proponents also of 'post-migrant social analysis' are quite aware of the ambiguities inherent in the term and concept. Practically all authors who connect to the concept agree on the need to overcome the binary opposition between 'migrants' and 'non-migrants' or their respective semantic relatives, while at the same time understanding 'migration' as a necessary aspect or dimension in any social analysis—which leads Regina Römhild to the image of a need to "de-migrantise" the field of migration studies *and* to "migrantise" the wider research and understanding of society and culture (Römhild, 2015, p. 39; cf. Dahinden, 2016). Using the semantic root of 'migration' is meant to criticise the 'obsession' (or "repetition compulsion"; El-Tayeb, 2011, p. 9) of society with migration-related terminologies and 'racial' categories of differentiation.

'migrant' versus 'non-migrant'-binary opposition and argues to shift the focus to 'plurality'-acceptance and -rejection (Foroutan, 2018, p. 292). This moves away from empirical observations of the contradictions between discourses and everyday practices, but at the level of normative political theory connects to long-standing debates about the constant tension between claims for liberty and individual freedom vs. the quest for unity and common nationhood in modern nation-states (e.g. Gellner, 1983, p. 148, 1997, p. 148; especially for Germany: J. Schneider, 2001, p. 370; Craig, 1982, p. 289).

In this context, it is worth highlighting that the first and the most outstanding protagonists in as much the artistic as the academic establishment of the term are ‘post-migrants’ themselves. As Kijan Espahangizi (2016) notes:

The post-migrant is rooted in processes of self-empowerment of the “children of foreigners”, as they were called for a long time, or the so-called “second generation” since the 1980s and 1990s. It is this genealogical connection to a thoroughly transnational social history of individual and collective struggles for recognition of one’s own existence, for respect, for participation, from which the post-migrant draws its legitimacy, validity and evidence today—and which is precisely not grasped, if one tries to unwind the whole thing in an academic discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the prefix “post”. In order to understand the post-migrant, it is not enough to ask what the word means, one must rather empirically comprehend what it does. [...] The ambiguity and unwieldiness of the word post-migrant [...] is thus not a conceptual deficit, but an expression of a lifeworld reference and a historical genesis in contested interstices. The family resemblance to the postcolonial is no accident here. The post-migrant is also not an elegant theorem for the attention of academic debates. As the current demand for the term in various contexts and projects in Switzerland shows, the post-migrant does important work, it helps to understand, it challenges, it empowers, it networks, it organises, it creates new spaces for debate. [...] It is a bastard. That is its strength.

The semantics and political power of the term ‘post-migrant’ speaks to these protagonists as much as its suggested analytical potential. However, it makes a difference whether cultural production brings the narratives and biographical experiences of ‘post-migrant’ individuals on stage and into bookshops or if social research uses the term as an analytical category. In the academic debate, the development of the term through the different publications and ‘schools’ has gradually produced a shift away from the individuals—e.g. Yıldız’ “young migrants of the second and third generation” and “post-migrant groups with their hybrid sketches of their lives” (see above)—to a concept for describing society (or even Europe) as a whole:

Attributions focused on migration always generate new forms of inclusion and exclusion. This is precisely why the personalised designation ‘post-migrant’ as a new name, as an unused word for ‘otherness’ in physiognomy, accent or family history is not really desirable. Regina Römhild and Manuela Bojadžijev point out that such a use runs the risk of “only giving new life to the old label, which then primarily includes young (post)migrants of the umpteenth generation.” (Foroutan et al., 2018, p. 12)²⁴

At the same time, the above described “intuitive attractiveness” and usages of the term ‘post-migrant’ among students of migration studies and in the ‘scene’ of highly diverse/hybrid academics and cultural producers to the point described by Mecheril above as ‘cosmopolitan, bourgeois-academic metropostmigrants’—indicate that the dangers feared by critical migration scholars and some of the outstanding proponents are (still) less dominant than the positive transformative effects on mainstream institutions and discursive practices. Looking at theatre again, for example, the very existence of Maxim-Gorki-Theater and the visible composition of its artistic staff, notwithstanding that it also represents a specific niche in the market, has strongly

²⁴The quote cited refers to Bojadžijev and Römhild 2014, p. 18.

increased the pressure on the entire German-speaking theatre system (cf. J. Schneider, 2024).

It is definitely part of the attractiveness of the concept for intellectuals and cultural producers as much as students of migration studies that it has brought new and other players into the field. In this regard, it also stands for a shift or 'de-centring' in the power to name and categorise towards the 'protagonists' of the term's career who have sufficiently influential positions to have a say in being denominated and to actively denominate. Yet, it also speaks of the anger and desperation of the rapidly growing 'migrantised' and 'Othered' part of the population about the widespread stubbornness in *not* acknowledging what has been long since the social reality. It is certainly no coincidence that the language used by the protagonists of this social reality—especially the super-diverse and hybrid youth in urban majority-minority settings—is quite blunt about this: it's about "different nationalities" and being a "foreigner", even in the third generation (cf. J. Schneider, 2018).

Considering this aspect, the term 'post-migrant' also sidesteps, at least to a certain degree, the question of how to frame racism and 'race' in the academic debate. In the German context, anti-racism is strongly influenced by the U.S.-debate and its central focus on physiognomy ('one drop of blood'), while the underlying logic of much of German racist ideologies rather rests on a specific imagination of the German Nation (see J. Schneider, 2001). The resulting construction is the Other as a 'foreigner' which includes genetic (and thus physiognomic) aspects, because nationhood even legally, until some years ago, defined belonging by blood descent (*ius sanguinis*). It also has a strong *cultural* component that allows feeding into e.g. anti-Muslim and anti-Slavic racism without any reference to 'racial' aspects. There is a specific colonialist element in the Othering of Black persons in Germany, but the underlying logic rather takes the skin colour as an indicator for non-German descent, as it does with names especially and also cultural aspects such as languages, dress codes and haircuts.

10.6 Concluding Remarks

The career of the term 'post-migration' is discussed here as an example for the role of terminology in and for knowledge production. What makes it particularly interesting are its origins at the intersection between academia, activism/politics and cultural production because it makes the interconnectedness of scientific terminology with the wider discursive context explicit. Also, scientific terms belong to semantic fields that may lead their own discursive and social lives. The productivity of the irritation of Levent Soysal's intervention mentioned above was to force the auditorium to think about the 'complacency' of the taken-for-granted validity of terms and concepts in their discipline. It is important to understand, how easily European social and political discourses again and again fall back into the dichotomies of 'natives vs. migrants' or 'ethnic vs. autochthonous' and continue seeing 'migration' as an *anomaly*—even when new terminologies are invented and

successfully spread (such as e.g. the ‘migration background’; cf. Mannitz & J. Schneider, 2014). Taking this into consideration, the struggle for words and concepts will not come to an easy consensus on what is ‘right’ and the adequate language to address a social reality in constant transformation:

Probably it needs a completely new language to describe the super-diverse, post-migrant reality of our societies and to think about them. But this will most likely develop only successfully when the reality itself is not questioned anymore. This would probably be a post-migrant vision. (Rupnow, 2018, p. 40)

Similar to Soysal’s ‘end of migration’, emphasising the *after* in ‘post-migration’ has had the potential of a productive irritation of knowledge production in several regards. The refugee movements to Europe in 2015/16 and from Ukraine in 2022, but also the almost forgotten situations at the Greek, Croatian and Polish borders, in Libya and Morocco and in many camps for newcomers within European countries, illustrate that thinking about society *after, behind and beyond migration* definitely helps to better understand society. At the same time, it makes us dramatically aware that it is still only one part of the story.

‘Post-migration’ is not going to be *the* solution to terminology-problems in migration studies, but its ‘biography’ indicates that it might be worthwhile to continue its operationalisation as a theoretical and conceptual tool for addressing the long-term effects of immigration on a given urban/local/national society. It certainly asks for more complexity than most of the established measurements of ‘integration’, ‘assimilation’ or ‘acculturation’ offer, especially because of the productive irritation it has caused, but also for the possible nexus to other forms of knowledge production, for example in cultural production and activist practices. What comes after it in the ideal case, is a mainstreaming of hybridity and diversity that does not require ‘special words’ for what is going to be just the normal population almost everywhere. Then, in the ideal case, that society could be called ‘post-racist’...

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Chapter 11

A Reflexive Turn in Integration and Assimilation Studies. The Importance of the Power of White People Without a Migration Background



Maurice Crul and Frans Lelie

For this reason, I call upon sociologists to work together to dethrone assimilationism from its exalted status in the sociology of immigration and scholars of race knowledgeable in these alternative approaches to actively reenter the arena of immigration studies and take the ground that has been ceded to the assimilationist frame. (Bashi Treitler, 2015, p. 153)

11.1 Introduction

Over the past 40 years, the field of Migration Studies has developed and grown exponentially to become a cross-disciplinary subfield. Theoretical knowledge production in this field has largely been driven by North American scholars, starting with the Chicago school (Park et al., 1925; Park, 1950). It describes assimilation through an ethnic lens in urban environments in four stages: contacts, competition, accommodation, and assimilation. Next to ethnicity, race has been a central topic in North American knowledge production as the US was not only built on voluntary migration, but also on the involuntary migration of enslaved Black people from Africa. Interestingly, scholars studying race relations and scholars studying migration and assimilation processes have developed almost entirely separate fields of studies. With only few exceptions, Ogbu (2004) and Wilson (1987) being the most prominent, the two fields have produced separate theories and concepts to analyse ethnically and racially diverse societies. In this chapter, we will argue that in order to make a necessary reflexive turn in Integration and Assimilation Theories, crucial insights from Critical Race Theory will make it possible to push the theoretical and methodological debate in a new direction.

M. Crul (✉) · F. Lelie
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
e-mail: m.r.j.crul@vu.nl; f.e.g.e.lelie@vu.nl

A prominent and major flaw in integration and assimilation theory is the un-reflexive handling of the concept of power and the uncritical use of the concepts of assimilation and integration (Dahinden and Pott, Chap. 1, this volume, or Schneider, Chap. 10, this volume). The power of white people without a migration background to influence societal outcomes has remained largely unstudied as the main focus in the field of migration and ethnic studies has been on the attitudes and practices of migrants (both non-white and white) and their descendants. Critical Race Theory (CRT), on the other hand, has addressed whiteness and the concept of power very prominently. Starting with Du Bois (1920, 1923, 1935), and more recently Roediger (1991) and Jacobson (1998), power has been an important concept in disentangling racial and ethnic dominance and privilege. How white people without a migration background continue to preserve their positions of power even in the increased ethnic and racial diversity of present-day society is also on the agenda of a new generation of ‘whiteness’ scholars (for an overview, see Twine & Gallagher, 2008): “it is these white inflections, the nuanced and locally specific ways in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented, that is the central focus of third wave whiteness” (ibid., p. 5). In this article, we will use the concept of power as described by Twine and Gallagher in the above quote: power as it is used by white people without a migration background and which influences the climate regarding diversity in a neighbourhood or workplace, for example, and impacts people with a migration background and/or non-white people. The impact of power in the form of institutional power is something we have discussed in other articles, but this will not be our focus of attention here (Crul & Schneider, 2010; Crul et al., 2012). In this chapter, we argue that we need to assess how the attitudes and actions of the most powerful group—white people without a migration background in Europe or non-Hispanic whites in the US—influence the diversity context. These attitudes and actions are principal factors influencing the outcomes for non-white people¹ and/or people with a migration background in the ethnically diverse context. We consider these people analytically as the mirror group of the group of white people without a migration background. Non-white people partly overlap with people with a migration background, but a considerable group of people with a migration background is phenotypically white.

Increasingly, in the social and scientific debate on migration and diversity there is discussion about whether labelling or categorizing groups is actually the core of the problem.

It has been argued that if we stopped dividing people into groups, the emphasis would be on the similarities between people rather than the differences. There is much to be said for such an approach. It is true that people share more similarities than differences, and in terms of biology there is only one human race. At the same time, there is also a strong social movement claiming that the existence of ethnic differences and differences in skin colour should be acknowledged because they

¹We will use the term non-white to address people who are not considered to belong to the category of white people, either or both by themselves and or by the people they encounter. We consider this to be subjective and varying in the different local contexts.

determine one's position in society to a large extent. In this chapter we will take the position that Pat Parker asked from white people in her famous poem from 1978: "*The first thing you do is to forget that I'm Black. Second, you must never forget that I'm Black.*" Our skin colour and ethnic background are characteristics that we have not chosen ourselves, but still shape for an important part, depending on the context, who we are and how we are seen. Therefore, we should, as Pat Parker says, see skin colour. However, equally importantly, we should not reduce anyone to the colour of their skin. Beyond skin colour and/or ethnicity, other characteristics reaching beyond ethnic and colour lines are also key to how one connects to and identifies with others.

The shift we propose does not only involve a shift towards studying power relations, but also a methodological shift regarding what should be the main focus in our research. In mainstream integration studies the focus is still largely on the ethnic and or racial minority group. This is critically referred to as using *the ethnic lens* (Glick-Schiller et al., 2006; Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012; Wimmer, 2013; Crul, 2016; Dahinden, 2016; Favell, 2016; Schinkel, 2018). We argue that the focus should shift to include the white group without a migration background and their impact on the societal context, for instance the context of the workplace or the city or neighbourhood context. Here, we make use of the social system theory of Luhmann (1996) who argued that everyone has to function in subsystems like the workplace, the school or the neighbourhood irrespective of their race, ethnicity or class. We need to study the social interactions in these contexts between the people who function in them. We want to investigate the 'diversity climate' in these contexts, and assess whether it provides opportunities or erects obstacles that hinder social mobility among disadvantaged groups.

We start out with the critique of Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars on mainstream assimilation and integration research in the field of migration and ethnic studies. We argue that CRT addresses some of the major flaws of mainstream assimilation theories (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Alba & Nee, 2003; Alba, 2009) used in the Euro-American disciplinary approach (for a good overview of the critique, see Romero, 2008; for work on the absence of race in migration studies, see Sáenz & Douglas, 2015; and for a response to the critique, see Waters & Kasinitz, 2021). We compare this critique with some of the criticism by critical integration studies scholars and argue for a fundamental change in the research design and aim of integration studies. In the last paragraph we show, based on the data of the *Becoming a Minority (BaM)* project,² how our new way of knowledge production differs and how it contributes new empirical data and insights on societal outcomes in ethnically diverse contexts (Crul & Lelie, 2023). In the conclusion we return to the discussion on how to move the field of integration and assimilation studies in a different direction.

²The *Becoming a Minority research project (BaM)* has been funded by the European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant 741532.

11.2 Critical Race Theory and Critical Integration Studies Scholars. Building Blocks for a Reflexive Turn in Integration and Assimilation Theory

The central idea of CRT is that ethnic and racial groups become racialized in a system of hierarchical stratification that is reproduced both top-down by public discourse and structural and institutional forms of racism, and bottom-up by individuals and groups of non-Hispanic whites who benefit from the group privilege this hierarchy entails (for an overview of the three waves of Critical Race Studies, see Twine & Gallagher, 2008). Ground-breaking studies in the field include Roediger, 1991, 1994; Frankenberg, 1993; Delgado, 1995; Jacobson, 1998 and Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Race and ethnicity are activated to reproduce this hierarchy and its inequalities. CRT scholars argue that the essence of whiteness as an analytical category is its distinction from non-white groups, a distinction that supports and reproduces the racial hierarchy (Essed, 1991; Bonnett, 1996; Mahoney, 1997a, b; Wildman & Davis, 1997; Garner, 2006; Khazaei, Chap. 9, this volume). In a racialized social system, all individuals in that context are racialized or ethnicized. Non-Hispanic whites or white people without a migration background from the dominant group in Europe, although often portrayed as race neutral, are also racialized through this system. They belong to a social collectivity as a racially white group or as the nationally white dominant ethnic group, that can be activated into being a self-conscious group that selects certain people for positions in the labour market (discrimination and exclusion), rejects certain people on the housing market (segregation) or activates racial violence (politics). CRT scholars show that white people profit from their white privilege in various ways and will actively defend that privilege (Essed, 1991; Bonnett, 1996; Wildman & Davis, 1997; Garner, 2006; Wekker, 2016). Challenges to this privilege for instance through the upward social mobility of non-white people and/or people with a migration background, may trigger negative attitudes and practices (Hernandez and Konyali, Chap. 16, this volume). The CRT literature describes how the feeling of loss of privilege is often met with sharp emotions stemming from a deeply ingrained sense of entitlement (Twine & Gallagher, 2008; Danbold & Huo, 2015; Wekker, 2016; Lipsitz, 2018). Lewis (2004) argues that whites often claim to be ‘beyond race’, to be ‘colour-blind’ and ‘to not think in terms of race’ (See also Frankenberg, 1993; Gallagher, 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Garner, 2006; Twine & Gallagher, 2008; for an overview, see Bonnett, 1996). But even individuals who claim to oppose the ethnic hierarchy cannot change their social location in this hierarchy and the privileges resulting from being part of the dominant group. Whiteness can be seen as a potential resource for whites, even for those who do not seek it. Du Bois (1935) refers to this as the “wages of whiteness” (see also Roediger, 1991; Garner, 2006).

CRT scholars have assigned a prominent role to the use of power by the dominant white group and argue that in the field of migration and ethnic studies the attitudes and actions of the dominant white group have been largely left out of the

analysis, thereby obscuring individual and institutional acts of racism and exclusion from the analysis.

Another important aspect of CRT scholars' critique of the field of migration and ethnic studies is that social inclusion and exclusion is primarily attributed to the social agency of ethnic minority groups, thus largely ignoring the existing power imbalance between these groups and the white group or nationally dominant ethnic group (see Romero, 2008). CRT scholars have emphasized that this focus on the racial minority group results in erasing the importance of the positions of power of the dominant group (non-Hispanic whites in the US) from the analysis (Mills, 1997). This has important consequences for where the emphasis is placed in the analysis. So-called failing assimilation or integration is primarily attributed to failing efforts on the part of non-white individuals. For instance, in integration and assimilation studies, trouble with finding paid work is often considered the result of insufficient assimilation on the part of the ethnic group; therefore this outcome is not commonly examined as being the result of potential mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination on the labour market. This approach ignores the actions and practices of the most powerful group in the equation. A smaller body of literature in CRT has addressed how white people have been instrumental in challenging the racial hierarchy and addressing institutional forms of racism (Roediger, 1994; Ansley, 1997; Flagg, 1997; Ignatieff, 1997; Case, 2012).

CRT and Critical Whiteness Studies scholars have shown the importance of white people in the abolition struggle and taking up the role of allies in the civil rights movement or actively challenging the racial hierarchy as 'race traitors' (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Ignatieff, 1997). The idea of the race traitor can be explained by taking the example of the labour market. The power position of white people depends heavily on the assumption that white people, based on their skin colour identification, reproduce the racial hierarchy through smaller and larger actions. Discrimination on the labour market by white people helps white people as a group to retain an unjust advantage over non-white people. If white people, however, hire non-white people for higher positions they partly take away that advantage for white people, undermining the racial hierarchy. Power can be used to maintain the racial hierarchy, but also to undermine it. Both understandings of the use of power by white people fill an important gap, we notice, in migration and ethnic studies.

The use of the concept of 'the mainstream' has been another important topic in the critique of CRT scholars. The idea of successful assimilation into 'the mainstream', which implicitly demands that people leave their own cultural baggage behind and assimilate by adopting white middle-class cultural norms and values has been criticized by many CRT scholars (for an overview, see Bashi Treitler, 2015). Indirectly this means that you can only be considered assimilated if you dress, eat, talk and make choices in the same way as non-Hispanic whites do these things. Having a non-Hispanic white partner, or moving out of an 'ethnic neighbourhood' are also regarded as indicators of assimilation. Collectively, whiteness is presented as a 'neutral' yardstick against which other cultural behaviour, norms, and values are measured (Frankenberg, 1993; Perry, 2001). CRT scholars argue for the

breaking down of the hierarchical ordering of norms and values that places one above the other based solely on the idea that the dominance of certain norms and values is justified by the historic rights of the dominant ethnic national group.

To conclude, the critique of CRT scholars on mainstream research in the field of migration and ethnic studies follows roughly three lines of arguments. Their first and maybe most important point is that the racial hierarchy and how it perpetuates itself is being ignored. Secondly, they note that there is an emphasis on the accountability of migrant groups or non-white groups for their own position, while the power of the white group and/or the nationally dominant ethnic group seems to be ignored. Thirdly, they criticize the concept of assimilation, in which white middle-class norms and practices are the yardstick to which all groups must adapt to be considered assimilated or integrated.

Partly aligned with this critique, critical migration scholars have also formulated four major points of critique. Similar to CRT scholars, some critical migration scholars have pointed to the absence of the concept of power in migration and ethnic studies and to the scant attention paid to the most powerful group in the equation (see, for instance, Crul & Lelie, 2021). Secondly, critical migration scholars have formulated a critique of the ethnic lens in migration and ethnic studies which over-emphasizes the importance of the ethnic group as a unit of analysis, to the detriment of other important characteristics such as class or gender (Glick-Schiller et al., 2006; Crul, 2016; Dahinden, 2016). Thirdly, partly in response to the ethnic lens, these scholars emphasize the importance of the context of integration, particularly the importance of institutional arrangements in education and the labour market that influence outcomes (Crul & Schneider, 2010; Crul et al., 2012) as well as the importance of large urban restructuring processes in cities (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2010). Fourthly, there is the critique on the concept of integration itself (Favell, 2014, 2016; Schinkel, 2017, 2018), targeting the notion that migrants are not integrated in society to start with, while non-migrants are exempt from the need to integrate into the (superdiverse) community. Also, there is the critique on the idea of integration at the group level as this blurs the view on within-group differences (Crul, 2016).

The critiques of both CRT scholars and critical migration scholars are, to a certain extent, aligned. Both target the concept of assimilation or integration as problematic, both target the overemphasis on the agency of the non-white groups and migrant groups, while ignoring the power of the white group or dominant non-migrant group, and both point to structural and institutional arrangements that block mobility. Their combined critique is the starting point for our plea for a reflexive turn in integration and assimilation studies.

11.3 Methodological Critique

The above-formulated theoretical and conceptual critique has also resulted in a number of methodological problems in the field of integration and assimilation studies. First there is the absence of the concept of Whiteness in the field of

migration and ethnic studies. Bhambra describes this omission of the concept of Whiteness as ‘methodological whiteness’ with a reference to methodological nationalism (Bhambra, 2017). Methodological whiteness, she argues, has radical consequences in terms of what is—and what is not—researched by whom. In line with Sartre, Emirbayer and Desmond (2012, p. 581) state that the group of white people is now experiencing ‘the shock of being seen’: “After centuries of studying without being studied, of examining without being examined (or so they thought), white scholars have found themselves face to face with an other that stares back at them, writes back, and analyzes back.”

Scholars in the field of integration and assimilation studies have largely evaded ‘the shock of being seen’ by refraining from studying white people without a migration background. CRT scholars state that whiteness and white supremacy in the racial hierarchy need to be included in the analysis by studying the attitudes and practices of white people in their positions of power (see also Khazaei, Chap. 9, in this volume). Differences in power positions, based on the racial and ethnic hierarchy, have been analytically written out of the analysis by analysing the position of people with a migration background in comparison to white people without a migration background as if they have the same positions of power. Failing to reach the same or a better position as the norm group is attributed to the failure of that particular ethnic group and not to the norm group defending their superior position of power.

In addition to the critique of not including whiteness and the concept of power in the analysis there is also critique of the use of the ethnic lens. This critique, also expressed by CRT scholars, is formulated more elaborately in the field of migration and ethnic studies. It starts with the practice, which is very common, especially in quantitative migration research, of measuring the level of assimilation or integration at the ethnic group level in comparison to the norm group. All individual scores are grouped together in one combined score to measure how far this group falls below the average point of the nationally dominant ethnic or racial group. In many ethnic groups, a substantial part of its members scores well above the average of the dominant ethnic group. These members should actually be considered ‘over integrated’ or ‘over assimilated’ on the individual level. Consequently, and equally important, individual people without a migration background or individual non-Hispanic white people who score below their own group average should then also be considered as examples of failed integration. This is not, however, how it is operationalized. Only migrants or the children of migrants or non-white groups are considered as being unintegrated or unassimilated. Schinkel (2018) calls this the ‘dispensation’ of assimilation or integration for non-Hispanic white people and people without a migration background. This goes to show that in the end assimilation or integration is not about how well-integrated an individual is socio-economically, but to what group that person belongs. As Schinkel (*ibid.*) explains, an interesting transfer is made between the individual and the group level. Individual scores of people belonging to an ethnic group are captured and hidden in the average of that group. If the group as a whole scores lower than the average for the dominant ethnic or racial group, the evaluation is that this group has not yet assimilated or integrated

into society properly. Integration is measured individually, but evaluated at the group level. A ‘lack’ of integration at the group level is what Schinkel (*ibid.*) calls ‘infectious’ for all its members, even when some of them score above the average of the dominant group.

The focus on the ethnic group as unit of analysis also obscures the importance of the context in which the supposed integration or assimilation must take place. Most integration or assimilation studies are conducted in one single country context, which results in the national institutional arrangements and national structural forms of racism being implicitly taken as a given, thereby rendering them largely extraneous to integration and assimilation models. Comparing people from the same ethnic group in different national and city contexts shows, however, that the national context has a huge impact on the social mobility of groups. Making use of the integration context theory, scholars have shown how some institutional arrangements in education and the labour market hinder the children of migrants, but, at the same time, how other institutional arrangements, such as early childhood education, the postponement of tracking and selection for secondary education and the availability of alternative routes to higher education, can help disadvantaged children to succeed at school against all odds (Crul et al., 2012). International comparative work makes it possible to study the impact of national institutional arrangements as well as differences in national institutional forms of racism or, alternatively, the impact of anti-racism legislation and individual and collective anti-racism actions.

11.4 A New Reflexive Research Agenda

The main insights from paragraph 3 demand a radically different research agenda. Rather than studying the integration or assimilation of different ethnic groups, we propose paying some long overdue attention to the forgotten, yet most powerful group in integration processes: white people without a migration background and their impact on societal contexts. This includes (1) analysing their impact on the diversity climate in a neighbourhood or city context; and (2) analysing their impact on either blocking or enabling the social mobility of disadvantaged groups. We will give two brief examples of how this alternative research agenda would be operationalized, making use of data from a recent study that we have already mentioned: the *Becoming a Minority (BaM)* project (Crul & Lelie, 2023). In the large-scale international TIES³ project, which formed the foundation from which we developed the *Integration Context Theory* (Crul & Schneider, 2010), we looked at how national and local institutional arrangements regarding education and the labour market impact the native-born children of immigrants in several European countries. The TIES project laid bare how more structural institutional forms of power, such as how the local educational system is designed (examples include early or late

³TIES: “The Integration of the European Second Generation”

tracking or the dependency on support given by parents) and how the transition from school to work is organized (e.g. whether or not there is a well-organized internship system or widespread on-the-job training), have impacted the position of the second generation in the different countries. In the BaM project we aim to lay bare another type of power that impacts the opportunities and well-being of people with a migration background and/or non-white people. By weighing up the sum of the different diversity attitudes and diversity practices of white people without a migration background within a certain context, such as a majority-minority neighbourhood or the workplace, we can assess the locally specific ways in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed and policed, as Twine and Gallagher would put it. This is an important missing piece of the integration and assimilation research puzzle. We acknowledge, as we did in our research among the second generation, that there are large within-group differences that can influence the diversity climate in different and even opposite directions.

In 2019, the BaM project team conducted a survey in six European cities: Amsterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg, Malmö, Rotterdam and Vienna. It included more than 3000 respondents without a migration background between the ages of 25 and 45, living in majority-minority neighbourhoods, which are neighbourhoods where there is no longer a numerical ethnic majority as the population is constituted of many minorities. We define a person as being without a migration background if they were born in the survey country and both their parents were also born in the survey country. Hence, people within this sample could be third generation or more and, as a consequence, might identify as non-white or as having a migration background. The BaM questionnaire contained a question where people could self-identify as such. For this analysis we took those who identified as non-white or as having a migration background out of the sample, restricting our sample to white people without a migration background. The excluded subsample makes up 6% of the total sample, hence the group of people over 25 years old who are third generation (or more) is still relatively small.

We sampled respondents in all of the neighbourhoods in the cities under research with a majority-minority composition because we wanted to study a context where ethnic diversity is part of everyday life. We sampled people without a migration background either through register data (whereby both country of birth and country of birth of both parents had to be the survey country), through onomastic sampling (name recognition and then screening based on country of birth and country of birth of both parents) or through random walks in majority-minority neighbourhoods (and then screening based on country of birth and country of birth of both parents).

The data generated during the BaM project is well-suited to demonstrate the shift of focus that we argue for in this article. They enable us to analyse the diversity climate for different contexts and see whether it either allows non-white people and/or people with a migration background to belong and feel safe or whether it creates a context of unsafety and not being accepted and valued.

In the following short example, we will compare the impact of white people without a migration background on the diversity climate in majority-minority neighbourhoods in Hamburg, Amsterdam and Vienna. Of the six cities studied as

part of BaM, these three cities are the most similar in terms of their socio-economic characteristics. They all have a strong financial, commercial and service sector economy. Using the BaM survey data on white people without a migration background living in majority-minority neighbourhoods, we assessed the diversity climate in their neighbourhood. We asked the BaM respondents about their overall assessment of interethnic interactions in the street in their neighbourhood. They could answer pleasant, unpleasant or not having any interethnic interactions. Table 11.1 shows the percentage of unpleasant interactions reported in these three cities.

There are considerable differences between the three cities with regard to reported unpleasant interethnic interactions in the streets. We found similar differences for reported unpleasant interethnic encounters in shops, parks and playgrounds (see Crul & Lelie, 2023). An interesting finding is that some subgroups were disproportionately involved in negative interethnic encounters in the street. The subgroup of people who were negative about migration-related diversity (they expressed seeing migration as a threat) and who reported having no or hardly any friends or acquaintances with a migrant background is especially overrepresented as a group that reports negative interethnic interactions. Although the respondents who were both negative about migration-related diversity and who did not have a mixed social circle formed 20% of our total sample in the three cities, they were involved in 42% of the totality of reported unpleasant interethnic interactions in the streets. With this, they exert a disproportionate weight on the scale of the diversity climate in their neighbourhood, pushing it in a negative direction. The proportion of white people without a migration background in majority-minority neighbourhoods with such a negative stance towards migration-related diversity is especially large in Vienna, while it is much smaller in Amsterdam. One can presume that the sense of safety and belonging in their neighbourhood among people who are non-white and/or have a migration background is very different in Vienna than it is in Amsterdam. This difference in context is not usually taken into account when assessing standard indicators of integration or assimilation such as identity, belonging or interethnic contact for non-white people and/or people with a migrant background. If the impact of the white people without a migration background on the diversity climate were to be taken into account, it is likely that the interpretation of the outcomes for these indicators for integration would be quite different.

Our second example concerns the workplace. To take the element of exercising power on board in a different way than in the previous example, we will now zoom in on white people without a migration background in supervisory positions. In the BaM survey we asked people whether they had a supervisory position, and, if so,

Table 11.1 White respondents without a migration background in majority-minority neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, Hamburg and Vienna who reported unpleasant interethnic interactions in the street

| | Amsterdam | Hamburg | Vienna |
|---|-----------|---------|--------|
| Unpleasant interethnic interactions in the street | 17% | 25% | 40% |

Source: BaM Survey

how many people in their team had a migration background. We will first look at supervisors who have a BA or MA diploma. The ability to hire and promote—or to decide not to hire or promote—non-white people and/or people with a migration background is one of the most important ways in which white people without a migration background can exercise their power and determine the opportunities for social mobility that are available to non-white people and/or people with a migration background. We will now, as an example, see which characteristics of white supervisors without a migration background are related to having a mixed team and whether we can find characteristics which are related to having a more exclusive team, consisting of people without a migration background. Is there, for instance, a relationship between the ethnic composition of the teams led by these supervisors and their own diversity attitudes or practice? Keep in mind that all of the respondents were living in majority-minority cities. We found that both being positive about migration-related diversity and having a mixed social circle correlates with having a mixed team, but that diversity practices, i.e. having a diverse group of friends and acquaintances, are far more important than having a positive take on diversity. A supervisor's diversity practice trumps their diversity attitude. People who are negative about diversity and do not have a mixed friendship group lead the least diverse teams. About two thirds (63%) reported that there were no or almost no people with a migration background in their team. For the group that was positive about migration-related diversity and had a mixed group of friends (half or more of their friends and acquaintances have a migration background) that percentage was only 14%. It seems that people make their position on diversity (expressed in both their attitudes and their practices) count when they are in a position of power. In the BaM project, we use the image of a scale where some white people without a migration background use their influence to push the scale towards acceptance, while others push the scale towards rejection of migration-related diversity. The sum of these forces determines the diversity climate.

We can also look at people in a supervisory position in the three cities who do *not* have a BA or MA diploma, such as factory foremen, logistics managers, shop floor managers or the heads of an administrative team within an organization. These supervisors are much more likely than leaders with a BA or MA diploma to be in charge of a team with a large share or even a majority of non-white people and/or people with a migration background. Often, they are not responsible for hiring these people, but they do have considerable power to determine the work climate. In the BaM survey, we asked the classical temperature question, where respondents can indicate on a scale whether they have warm (100°) or cold (0°) feelings towards people with a migration background. We asked this question in a different section of the survey than the section where we asked about a potential supervisory role, but we can connect the two outcomes with each other. We found that no less than a quarter of the supervisors without a BA or MA diploma expressed cold feelings towards people with a migration background. A third of the supervisors who expressed such cold feelings are in charge of a team where half or more of its members have a migration background. For these people, the impact of their supervisor's position on the work climate must be considerable. When we made the question

even more specific by explicitly asking about how people felt about differences regarding religion and ethnicity, and how warmly or coldly they felt towards migrants from North Africa and the Middle East, we saw that 44% of the supervisors expressed cold feelings towards this group. It seems that the work climate can be even more negative for specific people with a migration background. Working in a workplace where your supervisor holds such opinions about non-white people and/or people with a migration background has serious consequences for your feelings of safety and well-being as an employee and, also, potentially for your career opportunities.

The different positions that supervisors can take demonstrate that it is important that the agency of migrants and/or non-white people aligns with the agency of white people without a migration background who have a positive attitude regarding migration-related diversity and who support their social mobility. If this aligns, the potential for change in the racial hierarchy could grow exponentially. But if it does not align, opportunities for social mobility may be blocked.

We gave brief examples of a shift in focus from the emphasis on assimilation and integration theories regarding migrant groups to a focus on the impact of the attitudes and practices of white people without a migration background on different societal contexts. These examples show that assimilation or integration outcomes for different migrant groups as they have been presented for decades, have been strongly biased because the diversity climate in the contexts where these people live and work has not been taken into account. These diversity contexts can vary widely. In the TIES Project we studied, among many other things, the feelings of belonging of European-born children of Turkish immigrants and their chances of being successful at school and in the labour market in 15 European cities (Crul et al., 2012). Huge differences emerged between the city and country contexts. Some of these outcomes can now be viewed in a new light, in combination with the BaM data analyses. In the TIES survey, only 30% of the second-generation Turkish respondents in Vienna answered that they were certain they would not ever like to live in the birth country of their parents, while this was 43% in Amsterdam. This difference makes more sense, now that we have assessed the difference in the diversity climate in the neighbourhoods where these people grew up and lived (Schneider et al., 2012).

11.5 Conclusion and Discussion

The field of integration studies has been dominated by the grand theories of assimilation and integration, which are characterized by a predominant focus on ethnic groups (the ethnic lens) and whether or not they are achieving a successful socio-economic and socio-cultural position in society in comparison to the dominant group: white people without a migration background. Explaining outcomes through the lens of the ethnic group has led to an overemphasis on group characteristics, presenting the efforts of people with a migration background to gain a position in society as if these efforts are made in a vacuum. The context in which non-white

people and people with a migration background try to gain a position in society often seems to be overlooked. Critical Race Theory, on the other hand, has largely concentrated on how a racialized society has been instrumental in keeping ethnic and racial groups hierarchically ordered. CRT scholars have examined how the most powerful group—white people—have kept the upper hand both socio-economically and socio-culturally.

In this article we have tried to make use of the critique of CRT and critical integration studies scholars to support our argument for a reflective turn in integration and assimilation research and to formulate alternative ways of doing research. One important path forward is to include and analyse the diversity context in which non-white people and/or people with a migration background have to attain their socio-economic position in society. This context is embodied by the institutional arrangements in society with their, often hidden, forms of structural racism, and by the societal climate regarding diversity created by the most powerful group in these contexts: white people without a migration background. In this article we have focused on the latter, using a few small empirical examples based on data from the BaM project to illustrate how we can include the power that white people without a migration background can exercise in both the neighbourhood and the workplace context. They can use their power either to create a more inclusive environment or to act as gatekeepers by excluding people with a migration background and creating a negative diversity climate. Our approach brings the importance of power and power hierarchies back into the analysis. To be able to do this, it is necessary to structurally include white people without a migration background as a target group in our research projects and scrutinize their role in integration as a two-way or multiple-way process.

Including the diversity climate in neighbourhoods, cities or workplaces as variables in relation to integration outcomes for people with a migration background in a comparative (international) approach will allow us to identify which types of contexts are favourable for social mobility, belonging and feelings of being accepted. Identifying these favourable contexts and how they come about will not only further our understanding of integration and assimilation processes, but may also have important policy implications.

A further important new avenue for research should be to examine how the degree of openness among white people without a migration background towards the increased migration-related diversity in which they live impacts their personal sense of belonging, their feelings of safety and their social mobility (see Crul & Lelie, 2023). We argue that in places where ethnic diversity is becoming the norm, as it is in majority-minority contexts, both socio-economic success and feelings of belonging and safety will increasingly depend on whether one is able to appreciate, acknowledge and act on the different norms and values that people have. This will increasingly be a key competence that people must acquire if they are to be happy and successful in a superdiverse society. An important question for further research will be what societal conditions can enable this openness to develop. In what context is the rejection of other norms and values more prevalent and where is there

more openness? For a society to function peacefully and successfully the mutual acceptance of different norms and values will pose a major challenge and this should therefore be an important avenue for new research.

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Chapter 12

Experimenting with Analytical Categories as Reflexive Method: Mobility Trajectories to Study Young People with and without Migration Background



Valentina Mazzucato

12.1 Introduction

The categories used in research are inevitably linked to the type of knowledge that is produced and, by consequence, the directions in which solutions for social issues are sought. While the confounding of policy and analytical categories in migration research has been criticized (Brubaker, 2002; Stierl, 2020), this paper addresses a separate issue, namely, the need to diversify the analytical categories that are used to collect and analyse data in migration research and in migrant youth studies. This need is particularly acute in quantitative studies, which often feed policy making in areas that affect youth, such as education, social work or migration. A continual feedback loop exists between the data collected, the research questions asked, and the way research is conducted. Once particular theories become widespread, their specific categorizations reinforce theoretical developments in one direction. Findings lead to future data collection that uses the same categories that produced the findings, hampering exploration of other possible categories. In migration research two analytical categories have dominated quantitative analyses: ethnicity and generation. There is a need to forge new, theoretically and empirically informed categories and experiment with them to make migration studies more reflexive (Dahinden and Pott, Chap. 1, this volume). New categories can help us see old issues in new ways, question the status quo (Hinger, 2018), and even change the questions we ask (Bakewell, 2008).

The dominant categories used in migration research in general, and in research on youth in particular, were developed in studies of assimilation and integration by researchers in the United States and Europe. The theories that guide this work take a nation-state perspective by comparing youth with a migration background to a

V. Mazzucato (✉)
Universiteit Maastricht, Maastricht, The Netherlands
e-mail: v.mazzucato@maastrichtuniversity.nl

“native” population, or to youth from different ethnic groups, or to youth of different migrant generations. Invariably researchers find differences or similarities between these groups, which means that findings can only relate to these nation-state informed categories. Findings in turn determine where researchers look for solutions. For example, a study that focuses on the second-generation can only link findings to the second-generation, and solutions emanating from such research are invariably aimed at youth of the second generation. Such a categorization presumes that youth of the second generation have commonalities that justify studying them as a group and that they will be largely affected by specific conditions in the same way. Consequently, such generational and ethnic-based categories do not allow for an adequate understanding of within-group differences. Nor do they allow us to explore whether there are commonalities between migrant and non-migrant youth and whether factors other than a young person’s status as a migrant may impact their and “native” youth’s lives in the same way.

Recent theoretical developments in transnational and mobility studies can help us develop new categories that are mobility- instead of nation-state based. Such categories can add to the current limited types of categories for collecting data on and analysing the lives of youth with a migration background. In a globalized world, new forms of inequality are emerging between those who are physically mobile and those who are not (Bauman, 1998). It is thus important to study the physical mobility of all young people, not just migrants, to understand how this shapes their lives and the opportunities and constraints they face.

My aims are threefold. I argue that using mobility-based categories allows us to broaden the context of analysis beyond the residence country, which is emphasized in dominant theories of migrant youth integration such as segmented assimilation theory (Portes & Zhou, 1993) and subsequent elaborations (Crul & Schneider, 2010). Such a broadening happens by opening categories to meaningful experiences and relationships that extend beyond the immediate nation-state context in which youth live. Secondly, I contend that mobility-based categories are a way to operationalize a temporal lens that has resurfaced in migration studies in reaction to the long-foregrounded focus on space at the expense of time (Griffiths et al., 2013). Mobility-based categories can help us to investigate how young people’s past and current physical mobility shape the ways they cope in the present and how this influences their future outlook. Finally, I maintain that mobility-based categories allow us to attend to the dynamic elements of young people’s lives, as such categories go beyond simple binaries (migrant/non-migrant, first/second generation, ethnic/non-ethnic). This heeds the call to develop categories that pay attention to process (Anthias, 2012).

The study of the mobility of young people is not new, but developing analytical categories based on their past and current mobility is. While previous researchers have criticized the use of ethnic categories in migration research (Brubaker, 2002) and pointed out the need to de-migranticize migration studies (Dahinden, 2016), they do not offer alternatives for the collection of large-scale quantitative data. I address this lacuna by drawing on a concrete example of mobility-based categories that I and a team of researchers developed while studying young people’s mobility trajectories, that is, their physical movements in time and space and concomitant

changes in their family constellations. We used our data to develop categories that reflect different mobility trajectories, based on frequency and type of travel, to investigate how international mobility affects their lives.

Although we used mobility-based categories to study young people with a migration background, they can be used to study all youth, irrespective of their background, and adults. Overall, I argue that migration research needs to experiment with multiple theoretically and empirically informed categories and learn from the new knowledge these categories can bring to the field. I use the word “experiment” to emphasize that we need to try things out without necessarily knowing the results in advance. To experiment requires collecting new types of data.

Before I start, a few words on terminology. I use the term “migrant youth” when referring to the published literature which uses this and related terms, but when presenting my research, I prefer to write “youth with a migration background” because I do not wish *a priori* to draw a distinction between those who migrated themselves and those whose parents migrated. The mobility-based categories presented here can be applied to any kind of mobility, including movements made within a country, but for the purposes of this paper, in which I address myself to migration studies scholars, I expressly focus on international mobility, which can take the form of summer vacations, short trips, exchange trips, “homeland” visits and the like. Finally, I use quotation marks for the term “home” country because young people may not perceive their or their parents’ country of origin as home. Likewise, as they may have been born in their current country of residence, the term “origin country” is also unsuitable. The quotation marks indicate a lack of appropriate terminology; this lack is in itself a sign of how far research on migration has been and continues to be guided by a nation-state perspective.

12.2 The ‘Transnational’ and ‘Mobilities’ Turns for Developing New Categories

Categories based on ethnicity (usually country of origin of youth or their parents) or generation (typically, first, 1.5- and second-generation migrants) have two characteristics: they reflect the nation-state perspective that dominates research on migrant youth, and they are static. That is, they obscure the multiple ways in which all young people are physically mobile and, specifically, how youth with a migration background continue to be mobile even after their or their parents’ migration to a new country of residence. To propose new categories, this section reviews two theoretical developments from the past three decades—the transnational and the mobilities turns in the social sciences—to build the argument that youth mobility is a useful avenue to explore to build new analytical categories. The transnational and the mobilities turns developed separately, but when combined, they enable new theoretically informed categories for migration research to be developed. I then discuss a third development in recent scholarship that brings these approaches together and the implications this has for category development.

12.2.1 *The Limits of Taking a Nation-State Perspective in Studies of Migrant Youth and Implications of the Transnational Turn*

The dominance of a nation-state perspective in migration research has been under challenge by transnational migration scholars for some time (Tarrus, 1987; Glick Schiller et al., 1992). Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) argued that methodological nationalism permeates migration research methodologies, in which a geographical space bounded by national borders is presumed to be the most suitable container for studying everything relevant to migrants' lives. This methodological nationalism is manifest in the dominant categories used in migrant youth research: those based on ethnicity, which tends to be seen as synonymous with country of origin, and generation. Defining a group by their, their parents' and sometimes even their grandparents' country of origin reflects a nation-state framework in which migrants or people of migrant background are marked in opposition to a so-called "native" population that is considered to be the norm. Likewise, categorizing migrants by generation means defining them by when they arrived in a particular nation-state, the so-called "receiving" country: a young person who arrives in the new country within their lifetime is first generation; someone born in the receiving country after their parents migrated to it is second generation; while those who are 1.5 generation (or variations thereon) arrived in the new country at a young age. The emphasis given to generation and arrival in the receiving country is guided by the dominant focus in migration studies on questions of assimilation or integration. For example, an important theory of migrant youth integration is the segmented assimilation model (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990), which argues that the path youth follow to assimilate into a society depends on the context of reception (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

Nation-state categories are also reflected in the types of questions that are asked by large-scale studies of migrant youth. For example, studies that examine migrant youth outcomes, such as physical health, emotional well-being and educational achievement, investigate young people's lives *in the receiving country*, such as their family compositions, schools and neighbourhood characteristics (Cebolla-Boado & Garrido Medina, 2011; Haller et al., 2011; Mood et al., 2016). Put simply, a focus on the nation-state, and the receiving country context in particular, permeates categorizations of migrant youth and the variables used for understanding their lives. This assumes that how migrant youth are faring can be understood by focusing solely on their country of residence.

Undoubtedly the country of residence is important. However, as Veerman (2015) points out, much variability in youth outcomes remains unexplained. Scholars have sought to address this by searching for new variables, collecting better data and using more sophisticated analytical techniques, but even then their explanations remain limited. Drawing on recent literature, I argue that the singular focus on the nation-state, particularly the receiving country, that has guided theory and categorization in migration studies has created important blind spots.

Three decades of transnational migration studies have shown that migrant realities do not map onto one national space. Instead, they are shaped by migrants' heterogeneous links to "home," which affect their economic and political activities, their identifications and their affective relationships (Levitt, 2001; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Guarnizo et al., 2003; Schmoll, 2003). Transnational family studies, while generally focusing on adults, show how migrants' lives continue to be intertwined with the lives of those in the country of origin, even at a distance (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Parreñas, 2005). For example, the well-being of migrant parents, local caregivers and children who stay in the origin country are linked (Dreby, 2007; Schmalzbauer, 2008; Dankyi et al., 2016). The well-being of migrant parents abroad is associated with how well they feel they are able to care for their children from afar (Haagsman et al., 2015). Conversely, the well-being of children at "home" is linked to the material conditions faced by parents abroad (Graham & Jordan, 2011; Mazzucato & Cebotari, 2017). While linkages between migrants and those in the country of origin were initially thought to be a first-generation phenomenon, recent studies have demonstrated that the lives of young people are intertwined with the lives of those who migrate and those who remain in their country of origin regardless of questions of generation (Mazzucato & Haagsman, 2022).

Most transnational studies focus on adult migrants. Some early qualitative transnational studies showed how young people's identities are impacted by their sense of belonging to an ethnic or diaspora group (Levitt, 2009). These studies were precursors to a more recent wave of case studies focused on migrant youth's relationships to their or their parents' country of origin. These will be discussed below, but first, I discuss the mobilities perspective.

12.2.2 Beyond Static Categories in Migrant Youth Research: Implications of the Mobilities Turn

Ethnicity- and generation-based categories are static. By categorizing a person by their or their parents' country of origin, or by when they or their parents entered a receiving country, we lose sight of the mobility that occurred before they arrived in the new country and that which may take place afterwards. Categories of ethnicity and generation render all previous or subsequent mobility irrelevant or invisible, making migrants seem static or sedentary.

In part, the dominance of ethnicity- and generation-based categories reflects the conceptualization of migration as a linear movement from country A to country B. This view of migration obscures all moves that take place after the initial migration. Even in the context of more complex movements, such as transit migration, the presumption is still that migrants are on their way to country B, and once there, they become sedentary. Scholars have criticized this static view of migration (Ehrkamp, 2020), and some have suggested that we give more attention to migrant trajectories (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014; Mazzucato, 2015) by integrating a mobilities

perspective. The mobilities turn in the social sciences can help us to develop more dynamic categories.

The mobilities turn places emphasis on the actual journey or travel of people or objects. By doing so, it adds something new to our understanding of migration. Early transnational migration studies have often focused on the economic, political, social and cultural relationships with a “home” country but downplayed the actual movement of people. In fact, some scholars have noted that to be transnational does not necessarily entail physical mobility but rather a consciousness of belonging to a transnational group, whether a diaspora, network or other border-crossing social grouping (Clifford, 1994). Sometimes migrants are not mobile if circumstances make it difficult for them, but they continue to engage with their home country emotionally, politically and economically (Levitt, 2001; Guarnizo et al., 2003; Schmoll, 2003). They make frequent use of information and communication technologies (Madianou & Miller, 2011), maintain memberships in “hometown” associations (Mercer et al., 2009), and give “home” an important place in their imaginations (Clifford, 1994).

Thus, early transnational migration studies focused on the ties that connect people to a “homeland” because they were reacting to a migration studies scholarship that, at the time, ignored such ties due to the methodological nationalism discussed above. But as a consequence, people’s actual experience of movement, that is, their experiences of the speed, rhythms and frictions associated with their mobility, was underplayed. The mobilities turn in the social sciences, which emerged separately from transnational studies, helped balance this by drawing attention to the way mobility is experienced. Originally examining everyday mobilities, such as commuting or weekend visits to elderly parents in the next town, mobility studies focused on embodied, sensorial and emotional experiences while travelling (Urry, 2002; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2010). Indeed, methods of studying the embodied experience of transportation were developed (Büscher & Urry, 2009).

But at its inception, mobility studies did not focus on migrants or migration. Over the past decade, however, scholars have combined a transnational approach with the processual and embodied focus of the mobilities turn to study migrants’ mobility (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014; Schmoll, 2014). These scholars have shown that one type of transnational phenomenon is the actual physical mobility that happens during migration. They have questioned the presumption that migration only involves a move from one country to another, highlighting that journeys, including through transit countries, entail a diversity of rhythms (King & Lulle, 2015) and periods of immobility (Schapendonk & Steel, 2014); they are not linear but can entail back-and-forth movements as people adapt to situations encountered along the way (Wissink et al., 2020; Ehrkamp, 2020).

The “second generation returns” literature combines transnational and mobilities theoretical perspectives to investigate not only what happens during migration, but also how people experience physical mobility after migration. Scholars often focus on longer-term returns that second generation migrants engage in, and how their travels affect their sense of belonging and identity. Homeland visits can be disorienting, especially when the reality of a homeland contrasts with migrants’ ideas

about it (Wessendorf, 2007; King & Christou, 2014). While some studies address the diversity of mobility that young people of a migrant background engage in (King et al., 2011), much of this literature focuses on permanent returns and adults.

In sum, both the transnational and the mobility turns in migration studies have questioned the methodological nationalism and static conceptualizations of migration that have dominated the field and highlighted the different rhythms, patterns and sensorial experiences of mobility that impact people's identity, sense of belonging and sense of self. Next, I discuss the implications this has for the development of new categories.

12.2.3 The Need for New Analytical Categories for Quantitative Research

That categories play a role in knowledge production has been argued forcefully by feminist scholars; some poststructuralist feminists denounce the use of any categories, while others show the need to complexify categories so that they are better reflective of social realities (Crenshaw, 1994). Within migration research, scholars have pointed to the dangers of uncritically adopting categories used in policymaking and thus imposing political and sometimes unjust and stigmatizing categories onto populations of migrants (Hinger, 2018). They have also criticized the problematic assumption that identity, and ethnic identity in particular, is the most important characteristic of a group (Brubaker, 2002). To avoid the homogenization and static rendering of social realities, Anthias (2012) calls for a focus on processes in social relationships that take place in diverse places and give rise to complex and often contradictory social positionings, something Anthias terms translocational positionality. Dahinden (2016) argues the need to de-migrantize migration research to break from the historical nation-state migration apparatus that normalizes discourses about migrants as different or "other". And Carling et al. (2021) argue that both migrants and non-migrants may have transnational lives and that we need to go beyond migrant-based conceptualizations.

These are important theoretical insights. Yet few studies give any idea of how concretely to operationalize them or how they might yield new categories of analysis. Dahinden et al. (2020) propose investigating emic categories held by people with a migration background. While it is important to understand the categories that migrants feel best represent them, a focus on emic categories brings two challenges. First, emic perspectives may be as diverse as the people who hold them, making emic categories untenable for large-scale studies. Second, using emic perspectives to develop new categories presumes that migrants are somehow not influenced by nation-state normalizing discourses. In fact, Dahinden et al. (2020) admit that the emic category of "migrant descendant" found in their study does not eschew the "national order of things," though it is, they argue, more inclusive. What is missing is an understanding of how to operationalize more open, processual and complex

categories into concrete categories for quantitative analysis. I propose that mobility-based categories offer a solution. In the next section, I explore why mobility is a fruitful avenue for developing new categories, drawing on recent studies that bridge transnationalism and mobility studies, and bring their findings to bear on the categories used in research on migrant youth.

12.3 Making Youth Mobility Central

The study of the physical mobility of young people has only begun to gather speed in the past decade. Following the latest developments in transnationalism studies and the mobilities turn, scholars have laid out research agendas to investigate the diversity of young people's mobilities, including the rhythms and pacing of, and sensorial experiences during, physical mobility (Robertson et al., 2018; Van Geel & Mazzucato, 2018; Cheung Judge et al., 2020). Responding to this call, the Mobility Trajectories of Young Lives project (MO-TRAYL), which I led, conducted several ethnographic studies into how young people with a migration background have been affected by travels to their "home" country. The MO-TRAYL researchers found that such travels keep young people engaged with family members who may have been important during their upbringing (Van Geel & Mazzucato, 2020), allow them to build transnational peer networks, increase their resilience when facing adversity in the school system in their countries of residence, and help them envisage hopeful and agentic futures for themselves (Akomi Ankobrey et al., 2021; Ogden & Mazzucato, 2022; Anshütz & Mazzucato, 2022). The studies show that young people's experiences during their travels are shaped by the sensory, emotional and rhythmic characteristics of their mobility. In addition to exploring short-term visits, other researchers have investigated longer trips made by young people to their "homeland" for the purpose of (in)formal (Kea & Maier, 2017; Abotsi, 2020), religious (Erdal et al., 2016) or cultural (Whitehouse, 2009) education. Some are "sent back" when they misbehave or when their parents can no longer balance occupational and caregiving responsibilities in the host country (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011; Kea & Maier, 2017). Other young people "return" to search for their "roots" (Potter, 2005; Reynolds, 2010). Although these journeys differ in purpose and duration, they shape transnational lives in which young people negotiate socio-cultural and religious expectations and identities. For this purpose, young people need a specific set of skills and to be acquainted with a "transnational family habitus" (Zontini & Reynolds, 2018, pp. 418–419). All of these studies thus point to the fact that young people's mobility, especially between country of residence and "homeland", is central to defining who they are.

Youth mobility does not figure prominently in quantitative studies of youth, and therefore readers might ask whether such mobility is an anomaly rather than a pervasive experience, which would call into question whether mobility can adequately be used as a category. In fact, the studies referred to above were small-scale and selected their research populations specifically to investigate youth mobility. They

may therefore be capturing the experiences of a very particular group of youth. Yet, the few large-scale surveys that have asked young people about their mobility show clearly that youth mobility is a common phenomenon, both general mobility and “homeland” mobility (Schimmer & Van Tubergen, 2014). It is common not just for migrant background youth but for all youth. The MO-TRAYL project found that all young people, irrespective of their ethnicity and including so-called “natives,” had significant international mobility in their biographies, ranging from short vacations in other countries to longer study trips, gap years and visits “home”. The frequency of short international trips longer than one week was high, with over 70% of young people travelling at least once per year (Mazzucato & Haagsman, 2022). Longer trips were less frequent, with about 12% of all youth, irrespective of ethnicity, engaging in them. The most common longer stays were due to a parent’s work abroad, a gap year and being born abroad. For youth with a migration background, the study found that 40% travelled to their or their parents’ country of origin each year, and an additional 20% every two years. Additionally, the project found that their travels are not dependent on their parents’ wealth or education. This suggests that mobility for youth with a migration background is something unique that is not correlated with other characteristics. Finally, and importantly, travels to the “home” country do not diminish across generations. While some of the early literature on transnationalism wondered whether the second generation would continue being transnationally engaged (Levitt & Waters, 2002), the MO-TRAYL findings suggest that young people with migrant parents, even young people born in European countries, frequently visit their parents’ home country. Indeed, such trips seem to increase over the generations rather than to diminish. Visits “home” are thus a widespread phenomenon, one that has been a blind spot for researchers.

12.3.1 A Data Problem

Although small-scale studies have successfully shown that travels to a “home” country can influence young people in significant ways, and although large-scale studies have shown this to be a widespread phenomenon, taken together, these studies have had surprisingly little influence on the conceptualization and development of new categories in large-scale migration research. Even when the nation-state perspective is criticized, this is done in a context that is saturated in the nation-state thinking that dominates how migration is perceived, analyzed and discussed, and nation-state thinking creeps into the categories used without being perceived (Favell, 2001; De Genova, 2013). Importantly, investigating alternative categorizations is also difficult because the large-scale data necessary to do so are scarce. Categories and data collection go hand-in-hand. Statistics are a form of governmentality (Foucault, 2007) and reinforce a nation-state perspective. Most surveys on migration thus collect data on ethnicity or generation, while registry data reflect only what happens within nation-state boundaries. Recent surveys have begun to collect data on ongoing mobility within and outside of the borders of the nation-state, such as

the NCCR Migration-Mobility survey in Switzerland (Crettaz & Dahinden, 2019) and the CILSS4EU in four European countries (Schimmer & Van Tubergen, 2014). However, the questions on these surveys are too limited to produce mobility-based categories. The MAFE and TeO2 datasets managed by INED in France are the exception. They are the most complex and collect mobility trajectories over a respondent's lifetime (Beauchemin, 2012; Beauchemin et al., 2023). These surveys have yet to be used to develop mobility-based categories, but they have the potential to do so and to test some of the ideas presented here and explored with the MO-TRAYL dataset, which I explain below.

12.3.2 Exploring Mobility-Based Categories

The MO-TRAYL project conducted a quantitative survey of secondary school children in three European countries (Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands) and Ghana. It collected detailed data on young people's mobility patterns and experimented with using mobility-based categories to understand young people's lives. The researchers proposed to focus on "youth mobility trajectories," defined as the moves that young people make over time and across geographically distinct localities and the changing family constellations that these entail (Van Geel & Mazzucato, 2018, p. 2145). The focus on mobility trajectories addresses several of the limitations identified earlier. First, it "de-migranticizes" data collection, as it collects mobility data among so-called "natives" as well as young people with a migration background. This is done by collecting data on different types of international mobility, not just visits "home" but also student exchanges, temporary moves with the family, vacations and so forth. Over time, all these moves together comprise a mobility trajectory. Second, a focus on mobility trajectories can help explain within-group differences, something that has been lacking in much migration research (Anthias, 2012). Third, it allows a temporal view of mobility by attending to mobility over the life course. For migrant youth, this does justice to the complexity of their mobility, which may include mobility before an international migratory move and after it, as well as changes in family composition that happen along the way. Focusing on mobility trajectories allows researchers to take into account different social positionings (Anthias, 2012; Coe & Pauli, 2020) and family constellations that change as one moves over time, rather than assume them to be static.

The MO-TRAYL project mapped young people's mobility trajectories using the Ageven technique developed in demography (Antoine et al., 1987) for collecting important life-events that resembles Hägerstrand's (1982) time-geography but goes further in operationalizing the approach for large-scale surveys. Researchers have used this method to collect mobility data between country of residence and other countries. Few studies have used it in large-scale data collection on migration (Beauchemin, 2012), and only ours and TeO2 (Beauchemin et al., 2023) have used it to collect data on young people's mobility. This approach collects structured data on the timing, duration and purpose of travel. It also tracks who the young person

was living with and when, as moves can entail a change in who cares for a young person and in family composition. This methodology is flexible: it can also act as a visual aid for qualitative interviews and conversations about mobility, which can bolster the large-scale findings with detailed descriptions of embodied experiences of mobility (for more details on the methodology, tools and visualizations, see Mazzucato et al., 2022).

Collecting fine-grained data on mobility allows categories to be developed that can take into account the timing, rhythm or pacing of moves, which are all important elements of mobility (Urry, 2002; Cresswell, 2010). The MO-TRAYL project aimed to understand inter-group differences among youth with a Ghanaian background (meaning that either they or their parents had migrated from Ghana). The reason for this was that young Ghanaians living in similar neighbourhoods, attending similar schools, and with similar family structures seemed to experience different types of educational trajectories, with some entering university and others dropping out of school. If the environments are similar, what might cause the differences in outcomes? Might mobility hold the key? The MO-TRAYL project investigated youth mobility to Ghana drawing on literature, discussed above, which argues that such trips are important in helping young people to form their identities and their feelings of belonging. The team identified four empirically induced categories of mobility, based on the frequency, timing and location of moves among European-based Ghanaian-background youth (Van Geel & Mazzucato, 2018). These categories can be expanded upon to include other migrant background youth, non-migrant youth, and youth in countries of origin (below I expand the original categories to distinguish more types of travel).

In Table 12.1 in the Appendix, the four numbered rows in the first of the two A columns show the categories developed in the MO-TRAYL project for youth with migration background in Ghana, irrespective of generation. These categories distinguish between those who: (1) have only experienced one international move, for example a young person who lived in one place in Ghana and then migrated to a European city and did not move elsewhere; (2) have had multiple international moves, such as a young person who lived in one place in Ghana and, after moving to a European city, made many visits to Ghana; (3) have moved many times but only once internationally, for example a young person who moved internally within Ghana before their international move to a European city where they have since stayed; and (4) have moved several times nationally and internationally, for example a young person who moved several times within Ghana before migrating to Europe and then moving back to Ghana.

This categorization can be expanded, depending on the research questions, to other youth and other types of travel. For example, the MO-TRAYL project includes categories for what are often called “left-behind” youth (which we prefer to call “stayer youth” to avoid the derogatory connotations of the former term), given that they are also impacted by the migration of their parents. Mobility categorizations were also applied to young people whose parents migrated internally (within Ghana) or whose parents never migrated. These latter two groups are not shown in Table 12.1 for ease of presentation but were included in the MO-TRAYL project. They are

important to include in migration research as they are the most relevant reference groups if one is interested in understanding how migration and mobility impact youth. Yet they are hardly ever included, precisely because of the methodological nationalism guiding migration research. Mobility categories can also include other types of international migration, as youth with a migration background can move internationally without it being to a “home” country (Columns B).

The type of travel can be diversified by including specifications of places and durations. For example, in Table 12.1 in the Appendix, Columns C distinguish between types of shorter travel (national vs. international) and Columns D between durations of travel (visits/holidays for short stays vs. migration lasting 3 months or more). The sub-categories used in each column cover additional details concerning frequency; in Columns D, for example, a distinction is drawn between no travel, one trip and several trips. Depending on the types of travel that define a category, different youth types can be included. For example, Columns A focus on youth with a migration background in Europe. By expanding the type of travel, it is possible also to include stayer youth (Columns B) or natives in both the country of “origin” and the country of “destination” (Columns C and D).

The flexibility that these categories allow provides opportunities for important comparisons that go beyond the nation-state. Because they are not based on where the respondent is born, as are ethnic and generation-based categories, they can easily include non-migrant youth both in the country of “origin,” such as “stayer” youth with migrant parents abroad, and in the “destination” country, such as “native” European youth who may not have travelled internationally.

The fact that young people who are usually categorized differently in migration studies, such as natives and migrants or the first and second generation, can be included in the same category allows different research questions to be explored or different explanations to be found for certain outcomes. For example, by comparing youth who have travelled a lot with youth who have not, one may discover that what makes a difference to their educational trajectories is the level of their international exposure. Travel may impact the choices young people make about which secondary schools to attend, which careers to pursue, and whether to go on to tertiary education or not. This might reveal that youth who never travel, be they “native” or migrant youth, have more in common with each other than one might otherwise assume.

12.4 Conclusions

In this paper, I use migrant youth research as an illustration of the broader potential gains to be had in using new categories. Most large-scale research on “migrant youth” takes little account of the mobility of young people with a migration background, despite qualitative evidence from transnational and mobility studies that their various trips influence their identity and sense of belonging. Furthermore, general studies of youth that are not focused specifically on migrant youth have shown

that travel has important and positive consequences for young people's development, educational outcomes and careers (Brown, 2009; Parey & Waldinger, 2011). It is thus striking how little large-scale research has investigated the effects mobility has on young people, with or without a migration background.

I have argued that the dominant categories of ethnicity and generation hide the physical mobility of young people. Ethnicity and generation are static markers and are guided by a perspective of methodological nationalism. Because they are the only categories used in large-scale migrant youth research, there is little exploration of other characteristics that young people share irrespective of their ethnicity or generation. I use recent advances in the fields of transnationalism and mobility studies to argue that mobility is an important characteristic, worth exploring for its potential to experiment with in developing new categories for use in migration research in general, and in migrant youth studies in particular.

Migration scholars need to engage more profoundly with social scientific theories outside of the field of migration studies (Dahinden et al., 2020). Dahinden (2016, p. 2217) argues the need to re-think the idea that a migrant population is automatically the relevant unit of analysis. We should rather re-focus our analyses on whole populations, which include migrants but are not limited to them. Yet, concrete ways of doing this, especially for large-scale data collection, have yet to be developed. In this paper I have presented a means of enabling more refined data collection on youth, all youth, by focusing on their mobility trajectories. This entails several innovations.

Mobility-based categories allow researchers to move beyond an ethnic and generational lens. In a globalized world, those who can travel gain opportunities to reflect on their place in the world and acquire cross-cultural skills, cognitive flexibility and emotional intelligence, all of which are needed in today's rapidly changing labour market (World Economic Forum, 2020). The COVID pandemic restricted travel, and potential measures that governments may take to tackle climate change, such as raising the cost of air travel, may reduce young people's mobility. How this affects the salience of mobility as a category remains to be seen: it may reduce its importance, or it may make mobility an even greater mark of distinction. In such a world, youth with a migration background who travel to their "home" countries may be more like their "native" counterparts who travel for student exchanges than their "ethnic" counterparts or "natives" who never travel. Mobility-based categories allow the investigation of other characteristics of commonality rather than presuming ethnicity or generation to be the only or most salient ones.

Mobility-based categories also allow for the investigation of intra-group differences, which have been little studied in migration research (Wimmer, 2008; Anthias, 2012). They allow investigation of how differences in mobility between the "home" and residence country and differences in mobility before any international move affect youth with a migration background. These within-group differences may help to identify factors other than ethnicity that influence why, for youth living in similar neighbourhoods with similar family and school characteristics, some seem to do well while others struggle. Much needed investigations of within-group differences contribute to decoupling migration from culture (Mahendran, Chap. 14, this

volume). Such differences can help us detect the micro realities that enhance young people's life chances and identify concrete levers of change that can be applied to the school, family or other youth environments. For example, if mobility categories can help explain differences in life chances, then it is important for schools and educational policy-makers to take this into account in an effort to develop policies and practices that turn youth mobility into an asset for young people with a migration background rather than something to be discouraged and even penalized, as is done in many European countries that see trips "home" as educationally disruptive (Van Geel, 2022). Youth mobility to a "homeland" may help to create more equity in education as young people can draw on resources they gain from their ties to their country of origin. Equity rather than equality has been recognized as an essential policy focus for schools with a diverse student population in terms of social and economic backgrounds.

A focus on mobility trajectories allows a temporal lens to be applied in the development of categories by including people's past and present experiences outside of a particular country of residence. Mobility-based categories allow us to conceptualize migration as one among many types of move a person can make. As such, they bring into focus the moves that people may have made before their first international move and the ongoing moves that they may engage in following an international move. Mobility-based categories therefore go beyond sedentarist notions of human lives. They acknowledge that lives are made up of many types of mobility and that events, people and affections "elsewhere" can be important for understanding what happens "here." Rather than considering people who migrate, especially those from the Global South, as "people without a history" (Wolf, 1982), mobility-based categories bring people's individual histories into focus.

If they promise conceptual and empirical gains, new mobility-based categories also carry implications for how data are collected. Collecting mobility data is not an insurmountable task, but it means stepping out of the methodological nationalism that characterizes most large-scale surveys and engaging in transnational data collection. Most data collection at present is guided by a nation-state perspective and does not ask about people's mobility before they enter or after they leave a particular nation-state. It is true that the data collection I call for requires new efforts and will initially suffer from not being compatible with other surveys and databases that exist. However, this cannot be an excuse not to start collecting such data as it is only by diversifying the types of data collected that experimentation with different categories becomes possible.

The need to collect transnational mobility data has consequences for how we work as migration scholars. Transnational mobility data may be collected by asking people about their past mobility even when they were residing outside of the nation-state where data is being collected, such as the TeO2 survey has done. But it may also involve multi-sited research designs and collecting data from youth in origin countries, as was done in the MO-TRAYL project. Origin country youth are highly relevant to the question of how migration and mobility affect youth, as the best comparison is with youth who have no (international) mobility in their background. Furthermore, origin country youth are also affected by mobility either through their

parents' international migration or their own internal mobility of (Osei et al., 2022). To include them in our analyses means expanding data collection to different countries than those where Global North-based migration scholars are used to operating, and it necessitates fostering connections with researchers in the countries where migrants come from, something that Global North-based migration researchers have done only partially (Parvati, Chap. 6, this volume). Such studies will require funding agencies in the Global North to allow collaboration with countries in the Global South on an equal footing.

By de-migrantizing the research population and exploring commonalities other than ethnicity and generation, mobility-based categories heed the call for migration studies to engage with broader social scientific theories (Dahinden et al., 2020). By including all young people in a study, it is possible to bring findings to bear on youth studies and on the literature on tourism or international student mobility that has often focused on elites rather than general populations (Anschütz & Mazzucato, 2022). And vice-versa, engaging with other literatures allows migration researchers to extend their analyses beyond the usual categories of identity and belonging, which tend to be used primarily to analyse migrant populations, and instead to explore different conceptual lenses, such as self-development and resilience.

New categories offer new possibilities for methodological and theoretical exploration and innovation. They help to identify blind spots and assumptions behind conventional categories. Ultimately, the forging of new categories is a way of rethinking and questioning the way research is conducted, and thus of practising a more reflexive method.

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Appendix

Table 12.1 Possible trajectory and youth types that can be analyzed, using Ghana (GH) and The Netherlands (NL) as examples

| | (A) | | (B) | | (C) | | (D) | |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| | Trajectory types For 'migrant' youth in The Netherlands (NL) distinguishing between those who have | Youth population ^a | Trajectory types For 'migrant' youth in The Netherlands (NL) and 'stayer youth' in Ghana (GH) distinguishing between those who have | Youth population | Trajectory types For all youth (migrant and non-migrant) distinguishing between those who have | Youth population | Trajectory types Distinguishing between types of travels | Youth population |
| | Mobility to and from a 'home' country (GH) (marked as int'l mobility) Mobility within a 'home' country (marked as national mobility) | Migration backd ^b living in EU ^e | Mobility to and from a 'home' country (GH) (int'l) Mobility within a 'home' country (national) General international travel (other) | GH 'stayer youth' Migration backd living in EU ^e | Mobility nationally for greater than 1 week Mobility internationally for greater than 1 week | EU natives GH natives Migration backd living in EU Migration backd living in GH | Visits/ holidays < 3 months Migration ≥ 3 months | EU natives GH natives Migration backd living in EU Migration backd living in GH |
| 1 | Single or no national ^e Single international (GH ≤ 1; NL ≤ 1) ^d | Migration backd in EU | Single national Single international No other (GH ≤ 1; NL ≤ 1; Other = 0) | Migration backd in EU | No national No international (GH = 0; Int'l = 0) (NL = 0; Int'l = 0) | EU natives GH natives | 0 visits/holidays general 0 visits/holidays to a home country 0 migration | EU natives GH natives Migration backd in EU Migration backd in GH |
| 2 | Single or no national Multiple international (GH ≤ 1; NL ≥ 2) | Migration backd in EU | Single national Multiple international No other (GH ≤ 1; NL ≥ 2; Other = 0) | Migration backd in EU | No national Single international (GH = 0; Int'l ≥ 2) (NL = 0; Int'l ≥ 2) | EU natives GH natives Migration backd in EU Migration backd in GH | ≥ 1 visits/holidays general 0 visits/holidays to a home country 0 migration | EU natives GH natives Migration backd in EU Migration backd in GH |

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|---|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| 3 | Multiple national Single or no international (GH ≥ 2 ; NL ≤ 1) | Migration beckd in EU | Single national Single international Multiple other (GH ≤ 1 ; NL ≤ 1 ; Other ≥ 1) | Migration beckd in EU | No national Multiple international (GH = 0; Int'1 ≤ 1) (NL ≥ 2 ; Int'1 ≤ 1) | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH | ≥ 1 visits/holidays general ≥ 1 visits/holidays to a home country 0 migration | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH |
| 4 | Multiple national Multiple international (GH ≥ 2 ; NL ≥ 2) | Migration beckd in EU | Single national Multiple international Multiple other (GH ≤ 1 ; NL ≥ 2 ; Other ≥ 1) | Migration beckd in EU | Single national Single international (GH ≤ 1 ; Int'1 ≥ 2) (NL ≤ 1 ; Int'1 ≥ 2) | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH | ≥ 1 visits/holidays general 0 visits/holidays to a home country ≥ 1 migration | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH |
| 5 | | | Multiple national Single international No other (GH ≥ 2 ; NL ≤ 1 ; Other = 0) | Migration beckd in EU | Single national No international (GH ≥ 2 ; Int'1 = 0) (NL ≥ 2 ; Int'1 = 0) | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH | 0 visits/holidays general ≥ 1 visits/holidays to a home country ≥ 1 migration | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH |
| 6 | | | Multiple national Multiple international No other (GH ≥ 2 ; NL ≥ 2 ; Other = 0) | Migration beckd in EU | Single national Multiple international (GH ≥ 1 ; Int'1 ≤ 2) (NL ≥ 1 ; Int'1 ≤ 2) | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH | 0 visits/holidays general ≥ 1 visits/holidays to a home country 0 migration | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH |
| 7 | | | Multiple national Single international Multiple other (GH ≥ 2 ; NL ≤ 1 ; Other ≥ 1) | Migration beckd in EU | Multiple national No international (GH ≥ 2 ; Int'1 = 0) (NL ≥ 2 ; Int'1 = 0) | EU natives GH natives Migration beckd in EU Migration beckd in GH | 0 visits/holidays general 0 visits/holidays to a home country ≥ 1 migration | |

(continued)

Table 12.1 (continued)

| (A) | | (B) | | (C) | | (D) | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| Trajectory types For 'migrant' youth in The Netherlands (NL) distinguishing between those who have | Youth population ^a | Trajectory types For 'migrant' youth in The Netherlands (NL) and 'stayer youth' in Ghana (GH) distinguishing between those who have | Youth population | Trajectory types For all youth (migrant and non-migrant) distinguishing between those who have | Youth population | Trajectory types Distinguishing between types of travels | Youth population |
| Mobility to and from a 'home' country (GH) (marked as int'l mobility) Mobility within a 'home' country (marked as national mobility) | Migration bckd ^b living in EU ^c | Mobility to and from a 'home' country (GH) (int'l) Mobility within a 'home country (national) General international travel (other) | GH 'stayer youth' Migration bckd living in EU | Mobility nationally for greater than 1 week Mobility internationally for greater than 1 week | EU natives GH natives Migration bckd living in EU Migration bckd living in GH | Visits/ holidays < 3 months Migration ≥ 3 months | EU natives GH natives Migration bckd living in EU Migration bckd living in GH |
| 8 | | Multiple national Multiple international Multiple other (GH ≥ 2; NL ≥ 2; Other ≥ 1) | Migration bckd in EU | Multiple national Single international (GH ≥ 2; Int'l ≥ 1) (NL ≥ 2; Int'l ≥ 1) | EU natives GH natives Migration bckd in EU Migration bckd in GH | ≥ 1 visits/holidays general ≥ 1 visits/holidays to a home country ≥ 1 migration | |
| 9 | | Single national No international Multiple other (GH ≤ 1; NL = 0; Other ≥ 1) | GH 'stayer youth' | Multiple national Multiple international (GH ≥ 2; Int'l ≥ 2) (NL ≥ 2; Int'l ≥ 2) | EU natives GH natives Migration bckd in EU Migration bckd in GH | | |

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Source: Author

Notes:

^aYouth population columns indicate the types of youth that would be included in a study using the trajectory types identified in the previous column. Youth population does not represent the categories that studies would use. The categories are instead indicated under 'trajectory types'

^bbckd = background

^cNational indicates the moves within Ghana (or any origin country); International indicates moves to and within the country of residence; Other indicates all other international moves (e.g. a school exchange, a year abroad, a holiday in a country other than the origin country, etc.)

^dIndicates the frequency of trips. For example, GH \geq 2; NL \leq 1 means: two or more moves within Ghana and one or less moves to or from The Netherlands

^eNote that 'migration bckd living in EU' can consist of both the so-called 1st and 2nd generation migrant youth

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Chapter 13

The Violence in and the Violence of Gendered Representations of Migrant Others



Carolyn Fischer

13.1 Introduction

Knowledge production departs from different standpoints and epistemologies (Harding, 1992). At the same time, and particularly in academic contexts, knowledge production and sense-making involve different theoretical approaches, by means of which social phenomena are viewed, understood and explained. We can employ theory to highlight different origins and dimensions of the problem at stake and we can draw on theory to enhance reflexivity. Depending on the theoretical entry points used, it is possible to illuminate social phenomena in their complexity and to dismantle simplistic, stereotypical and sometimes polemic representations of these phenomena. In the introduction to this volume, Dahinden and Pott (Chap. 1) refer to the situatedness of knowledge and its relation to power as an important anchor of reflexivity. In addition to historical, geopolitical and institutional conditions, (access to) theoretical standpoints are important sources of situated knowledge. Against this backdrop, the present chapter explores how theoretical approaches to the workings and repercussions of violence can add consequential insights to ongoing debates on the production of knowledge in migration studies.

While using theory to better understand a phenomenon is a regular feature of all scientific work, I argue that theories of violence are specific in that they can help uncover the violent underpinnings and effects of hostile, populist representations of perceived migrant others. Critical scholarship therefore plays an important role in exposing some key mechanisms of racist exclusion through essentializing conceptions of belonging and non-belonging. More specifically, theories of violence can help us unpack the harmful effects of stereotypical representations. They also highlight the instrumental use of violence as an attribute of the perceived migrant other

C. Fischer (✉)
Berner Fachhochschule (BFH), Bern, Switzerland
e-mail: carolin.fischer@bfh.ch

as an act of violence it itself. This analytical shift of focus requires a broader theoretical understanding of violence to ultimately promote alternative narratives. Making such alternative narratives and their theoretical underpinnings accessible to a broader public audience is part of a reflexive scholarly engagement with migration-related issues.

Violence marks a salient theme across different social science disciplines. While the general understanding of violence as an act of doing harm goes relatively undisputed, it is difficult to add further catch-all nuances to its definition. The social anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgeois (2004) therefore note that violence remains a slippery concept that encompasses more than physical coercion and injury: “Violence can never be understood solely in terms of its physicality—force, assault or the infliction of pain alone. Violence also includes assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim” (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgeois, 2004, p. 1). The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what give it its force and meaning.

Depending on how the notion of violence is employed and theoretically framed in connection with migration and migrants, it can be used to place migrants in a different position and to ascribe certain attributes to them. This is usually the case when violence is used in an everyday sense. At the same time, however, theories of violence can help to highlight the harmful mechanisms and effects that are inherent to and result from negative representations of perceived migrant others. In such instances, violence serves as an analytical notion and entry point to understanding specific social conditions. To unpack how different theoretical understandings of violence may shape public, political and scientific engagements with migration, I will examine the interlinkages of migration, gender and violence in the context of right-wing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim campaigns in Switzerland. I demonstrate how gender is mobilized to amplify hostile representations of individuals and groups that are presented as problematic migrant others. This enables me to address a set of recurrent and consequential problems in the production of stereotypical representations with racializing connotations, which are widely used in public discourse and migration governance (Farris, 2012; Nieswand & Drotbohm, 2014; Dahinden, 2016).

I base my analysis on three xenophobic, anti-Muslim campaigns that have been run in Switzerland since 2009. Although these examples are particularly striking and were discussed almost worldwide (Hafez, 2014), they are not standalone incidents but part of wider anti-immigration and anti-Islam sentiments and mobilization in a broader sense. Social scientists have been examining the emergence, workings and effects of such xenophobic representations. Their findings yield important insights into the mechanisms at play in the construction of migrants as undesirable others whose presence represents an imminent threat for Swiss society. An everyday notion of violence is used as a symbolic tool to reinforce the danger of otherness. Interestingly, however, scientific analyses of these campaigns, their emergence and effects, has neither centred around the notion of violence nor employed violence as an analytical tool to help us improve our understanding of stereotypical, essentializing and ultimately racist representations of migrants as perceived others.

In the second part of the chapter, I move on to introducing different theoretical approaches to violence and review recent efforts to use them for the study of dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion. Building on these theoretical advances and their empirical application, I argue that theories of violence not only have an analytical value but also lend themselves as anchors for a more encompassing critique of migration governance and the leverage right-wing hardliners strive to exert through the use of stereotypical images. My aim is to unpack the analytical benefits that theories of violence may add to the production of knowledge on migration, the presence of migrants in society and the way this presence is turned into a subject of public discourse and political governance.

13.2 Discriminatory Conflations of Gender, Migration, Islam and Violence

The following three examples of Swiss anti-immigration politics lend themselves to demonstrating how culturalizing and racializing conflations of gender, migration and violence are instrumentalized for the purpose of canvassing the support of potential voters. The first example is the 2009 referendum for a nationwide ban on new minarets; the second example is the 2021 referendum on a ban on face veils; the third one is the 2010 referendum on the deportation of criminal foreigners.¹ There were two key driving forces behind all three popular votes: the radically right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the so-called *Egerkingen Committee*, an alliance of different right-wing protagonists that pursues the aim of counteracting what its members fear to be a "creeping Islamisation of Switzerland" (SRF, 2021). The SVP has built up an impressive record of xenophobic anti-immigration politics and associated campaigns as part of which racializing images are employed to underline the supposed detrimental impact of immigration on Switzerland and Swiss society (Skenderovic & D'Amato, 2008; Michel, 2015). For these campaigns, the SVP worked hand in hand with a politically aligned PR-agency: Goal AG. Alongside developing images for anti-immigrant campaigns, Goal AG has built up a track record of assisting in the campaigns of other right-wing actors outside of Switzerland (WOZ, 2019).²

The analysis of gendered images that right-wing parties mobilized as part of their campaigns indicates simplistic links between gender, migration and violence are employed to reinforce the migrant-citizen binary (Anderson, 2019) and to impose restrictions on perceived minority groups. This draws on Hall's theory of stereotyping by means of which he demonstrates how people are reduced "to a few,

¹I do not discuss the three popular initiatives in a chronological order but based on the specificities and underlying purpose of the stereotypical representations of migrant others they involve.

²It is important to mention that all three initiatives were decided upon by a rather narrow margin, which indicated how divided the Swiss population of eligible voters is with regard to diversity.

simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by Nature” (Hall, 1997, p. 257). None of these three examples explicitly uses the notion of violence. However, the images that form the centrepieces of the campaigns revolve around gendered stereotypes of violence and violent behaviour.

The popular initiative against the construction of new minarets was launched in 2007 and approved by a majority of the population of eligible voters in 2009. As is the case with all popular votes in Switzerland, the run-up to this referendum was accompanied by poster campaigns for and against a ban of minarets. Posters of the SVP-led ‘yes’ campaign feature a veiled female figure in front of several rows of minarets that strongly resemble rows of rockets, which grow out of the Swiss national flag (see Fig. 13.1). In fact, they are presented as an invasive destruction of the Swiss cross as a symbol of national integrity and as a threat to the Christian roots of an imagined Swiss culture (Farris & Scrinzi, 2018). By combining the image of a veiled, allegedly suppressed woman with weapon-like images of minarets, the poster draws an almost unmistakable connection between foreignness, Islam, gender and violence—which together pose an invasive threat to the Swiss nation. Both symbols suggest that Islam is inherently violent: the veiled woman is staged as victim of oppressive male chauvinism while the rocket-line minarets serve as an indicator of militancy. Thus, she not only embodies the danger of perceived Islamic otherness but also the threat of reproducing it within Swiss society. The poster was only one among many factors behind the success of this referendum. However, the way it conflates migration, gender and violence serves to accentuate the perceived threatening foreignness of Muslims as essentialized migrant other.

It is noteworthy that the image of violent disturbance of an alleged Swiss integrity is restricted to minarets. Church towers and other very visible architectural



Fig. 13.1 Bill supporting the campaign for a nationwide prohibition of newly-built minarets. (Source: goal.ch)

landmarks have not been stirring populist uproars. Such reductionist representations thus implicitly reassert the connection between Christianity and western modernity (Dos Santos Pinto et al., 2022). By means of the radical right-wing initiatives, Switzerland is being situated within this imagined value hemisphere while leaving longstanding shortcomings in gender equality unquestioned (Dahinden et al., 2018). Such tacit conceptions of Switzerland as a stronghold of western liberalism under threat greatly contributed to the success of the overtly hostile campaign.

Regardless of the reductionist and hostile imagery, the ban on minarets was also represented as a feminist claim and received support from some feminist groups (Stallone, 2021). By centring around the vulnerable female other, right-wing hardliners such as the SVP have jumped on the bandwagon of feminist discourse and its attack on patriarchy in a broader sense. However, the mobilization and instrumentalization of gender equality for nationalist purposes eclipses the violence of patriarchy in a broader sense by restricting it to the brown woman in need of saving from the brown man (Spivak, 1988; Farris, 2012).

Against the backdrop of its previous success, the image of the veiled Muslim woman was reactivated in the context of another—similarly xenophobic—referendum, which was launched in 2016. After they had accomplished the legal prohibition of newly-built minarets, an SVP-led coalition of right-wing protagonists sought to impose a ban on face veils in public space. In spring 2021, the Swiss population of eligible voters decided in favour of a nationwide ban on face veils. The initiative demands that in Switzerland, no one is allowed to cover their face in spaces accessible to the general public. This excludes churches and other places of worship. Further exceptions can be made for security, hygiene and climate-related reasons, as well as for reasons related to vernacular customs and traditions.

Although the regulation is phrased in a gender-neutral way (EJPD, 2021), campaigns in the run-up to the referendum were heavily gendered and racialized. Again, posters in favour of the campaign were created by the Goal AG. They feature, for example, a veiled woman and a hooded and masked male figure who is about to throw a Molotov cocktail (see Fig. 13.2). While she represents both the potentially militant extremist and the victim of her foreign culture, he alludes hooliganism as another gendered stereotype of violent extremism which is largely associated with men, though not with migration. The appearance of both gendered images on equal footing might be an attempt to soften the racist underpinnings of the initiative, as a way to gain support from more liberally-minded parts of the Swiss population. Yet, the referendum goes back to the same initiators as the ban on minarets, the so-called *Egerkingen Committee* and its relentless efforts to “stop the Islamisation of Switzerland” (SRF, 2021). At the same time, the joint appearance of veiled woman and male hooligan, in connection with the same plea, reiterates the perception of Islam as being patriarchal, inherently violent and thus destructive to Swiss society.

The colouring of the images used in both campaigns, the blackness of the niqab and the hooligan, add a dehumanizing touch. People are turned into little more than threatening shadows, which do, however, carry unmistakable attributes of (foreign) bodies that are not wanted or allowed in an allegedly liberal Swiss society. The reductionist links between gender, violence and otherness and the



Fig. 13.2 Bill supporting the campaign in favour of a nationwide ban of face veils. (Source: Egerkinger Komitee (<https://egerkingerkomitee.ch/mediendienst-vom-17-juli-2016/>))

stereotypical image of illiberal Islam emerging from it is further reinforced by the design of the visual material. Skillfully simplified images, Levrant de Bretteville (1974) notes, strengthen the power of the image while reducing complexity and promoting “visual authoritarianism”. “If there is no ambiguity the eye is attracted once, the message understood and accepted quickly. [...] For most clients and designers, the problem does not include a thinking audience” (Levrant de Bretteville, 1974, p. 117). While there is little ambiguity in the messages conveyed by the images themselves, the posters triggered much polarization in public and political debates, which is also reflected in the narrow margin by which the popular votes were won respectively.

The parallel between violent masculinity and migration becomes more explicit in the case of a third popular initiative, the *Ausschaffungsinitiative* (Deportation Initiative), which Switzerland's eligible voters approved in November 2010. The initiative demanded the expulsion of non-citizens who have been convicted of certain crimes. While the Federal Council discussed the implementation of the Deportation Initiative with the aim of settling for a compromise, the SVP launched another popular initiative, the so-called *Durchsetzungsinitiative* (Enforcement Initiative), to push for a maximum of restrictions. The Enforcement Initiative led to another referendum and was rejected by the majority of eligible voters in February 2016. One of the iconic bills supporting the campaign for the Enforcement Initiative features the head and torso of a heavy-set man with black hair and beard, dressed in a way that resembles stereotypical representations of gang members (see Fig. 13.3). The man's face disappears behind a text box reading *Ivan S., Vergewaltiger, bald Schweizer?* (Ivan S., rapist, soon to be a Swiss citizen?). The name chosen for this perpetrator adds further nuances to his foreignness by connecting it with the Balkans, from where an important part of Switzerland's migrant population originates. Again, this image conflates migration, gender and violence to suggest that the perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence are not only male but also of foreign origin. It also employs the same mechanisms of stereotyping that were used in the previous two campaigns. In this case, male immigrants from certain countries are represented as particularly prone to criminality and therefore deviating from and posing a threat to an unspecified Swiss normality.



Fig. 13.3 Bill supporting the campaign for the expulsion of criminal foreigners. (Source: Tagesanzeiger (<https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard/cvp-und-fdp-verhalten-der-ausschaffungsinitiative-zum-erfolg/story/11253338>))

All three popular initiatives and their associated imagery draw clear and simplistic links between gender, migration and violence. These links are racialized, racializing and thus discriminatory. They suggest that there are certain foreign cultures that are inherently gender unequal and prone to violence: women as victims, men as perpetrators (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Dahinden et al., 2018). Such beliefs and their repercussions on public discourse and political initiatives assert how societies—in this case Switzerland—are to a large extent constituted and upheld through boundaries with gendered bodies and images of violence being prominent markers of differentiation. However, it does not take a great analytical distance to acknowledge that these stereotypical markers of difference are violent in that they reduce persons to an imagined origin with associated attributes and dispositions.

The exclusionary dynamics inherent to and emerging from the three initiatives have been subject to scientific analysis, reflection and evaluation. Eskandari and Banfi (2017) demonstrate how the initiatives against minarets and ‘burqas’ played a crucial role in justifying exclusionary discourse on Muslims and Islam in Switzerland. Both campaigns contributed to an institutionalization of Islamophobia in Switzerland, which perpetuates colonial stereotypes. Boulila (2013) draws attention to the active contribution of Swiss feminists in juxtaposing what they consider to be a violent Muslim culture with the imagination of a liberal Swiss way of life. Fischer and Dahinden (2017) apply a historical perspective to show how the stereotypical representation of suppressed Muslim women that is used as part of the SVP-led campaigns is embedded in a broader trend of ethnicizing perceived gender inequalities in the context of migrant admission and integration. In a recent paper, Dahinden and Manser-Egli (2022) shed critical light on the ‘burqa ban’, arguing that it can be read as an expression of gendernativism. By this they mean a specific form of xenophobia which juxtaposes the stereotypical cultural other with an imagined, real, authentic citizen. Also in relation to the ‘burqa ban’, Tunger-Zanetti (2021) explains how the public appearance of niqab-wearing women may trigger fears and concerns relating to the supposedly oppressed stranger. Stereotypical representations of the malicious and potentially violent other ignore the context in which women opting to wear a niqab as an expression of piety. In her reflections on the outcomes of the 2016 Enforcement Initiative, Goltermann (2016) criticizes Swiss media for failing to name the narrow defeat of the initiative as what it ultimately was: a substantial confirmation of right-wing power and discursive impact, which exploits stereotypical images to its advantage.

The above responses to and analyses of stereotypical representations of violent migrant others as part of the three SVP-led campaigns are insightful. They uncover the mechanisms through which these campaigns draw on gendered violence to reinforce processes of exclusion, racialization, migranticization (Dahinden, 2016). The analyses moreover show how the SVP-led campaigns reflect the relevance of politically-constituted entities, such as the Swiss nation state or an imagined Swiss society, for the construction of epistemic others, like certain groups of migrants (Dieterich and Nieswand, Chap. 5, this volume). In this sense, research has importantly contributed to uncover the mechanisms and the historical legacies that are

constitutive for such instances of migrantization. So far, however, migration scholars have not employed theories of violence to analyze such forms of exclusion. This is surprising, because the images used as part of the campaigns place violence centre stage and use it to construct threatening images of imagined Muslim others. While violence is employed as a reductionist attribute, scholars have not yet studied such instances of stereotypical labelling as acts of violence in themselves. Before proceeding to fill this analytical void, I will introduce theories of violence as analytical perspective.

13.3 Theorizing Violence

To develop an encompassing understanding of violence, scholars from various disciplines have advanced the theorization of violence and specified a broad range of manifestations. Focusing on ‘structural’ violence, Galtung (1969) spearheaded an extended understanding of violence from physical to psychological damage, which includes alienation, repression and deprivation. According to him, violence that is built into structure and manifests itself as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances, without actors inflicting direct physical harm, is ‘structural violence’. Structural violence contributes to shaping the conditions in which other forms of violence can unfold. Epistemic violence, according to Spivak (1988), is exercised to eliminate the voice and knowledge of those considered as “marginal subjects” by damaging “a given group’s ability to speak and be heard” (Dotson, 2011, p. 236). Epistemic violence parallels Scheper-Hughes’ (2004) reflections on indifference as a form of violence and her observations that violence is complex and produced by multiple interlocking causes that are situated at different levels of analysis. Deep-seated inequalities, continuously reproduced by state politics, produce sentiments of indifference with those who are unequal to oneself. Hence, indifference and the silencing of those living at the margins of society represent two forms of violence that are distinct but closely related.

In a similar vein, Butler (2006) understands violence as exposure to vulnerability by the wilful action of another, which puts the other at risk and causes the other damage. Vulnerability, Butler holds, becomes exacerbated under certain social and political conditions. Again, inequality is central because there are radically different ways in which human vulnerability is distributed across the globe, which Butler frames as a “hierarchy of grief” and “grievability” (Butler, 2006, p. 32). For Butler, violence is a form of derealization of the other, which leaves them neither dead nor alive. Derealization implies that certain lives are not considered lives in the sense that they do not fit the dominant frame of the human and are not publicly worthy of grief. Stereotypical representations as a form of derealization thus give rise to physical violence. What these approaches to violence have in common is their emphasis on inequalities at different scales, which produce and reproduce human hierarchies. The latter are reflected in multiple—and often interlocking—forms of physical and non-physical harm.

In order to operate, however, structural and other forms of non-physical and often tacit violence require widely accepted legitimacy, the basis of which Galtung (1990) conceptualises as cultural violence, meaning “those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence [...] that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence” (Galtung, 1990, pp. 291–292). The notion of cultural violence highlights important dimensions of the conditions that underlie and enable structural violence. Against the backdrop of recent critiques, the designation ‘cultural’ is problematic because it bears essentializing underpinnings. I therefore use Galtung’s notion in a narrower sense to uncover the harmful effects of political ideologies and their repercussions on specific social conditions. Hence, while structural violence is the process, cultural violence is the permanence, the justification that underpins instances of non-physical harm. What is conceptually understood as structural and cultural violence requires the stable reproduction of overarching conditions (Tyner, 2016), which are created and upheld by political practice and normalizing ideologies (Galtung, 1990; Tyner & Inwood, 2014) on the one hand and indifference (Scheper-Hughes, 2004) and inaction (Davies et al., 2017) on the other.

How different dimensions of violence sustain each is clearly context-specific. However, what seems to be a common denominator is that they systematically render certain populations more vulnerable than others. Race, gender, sexuality, class, and age are intertwined in the complex relations, dimensions and manifestations of violence (Grisard et al., 2022). In the analysis I conduct in this chapter, I particularly expose the combined weight of race and gender in shaping articulations of violence. As violence is considered as a continuum, it is important to acknowledge that its multiple articulations may occur to the same person, sometimes at different times and in different geographical locations (Springer & Le Billon, 2016). At the same time, different forms of violence are mutually intertwined and often co-constitutive: “Violence gives birth to itself” (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgeois, 2004, p. 1). Any given articulation of violence not only reproduces itself, but often also promotes other forms of violence that involve a variety of actors and that have manifold consequences for those affected. The idea of violence as a continuum underlines its multifaceted nature and suggests that, depending on the settings and actors involved, different manifestations of violence can contribute to shaping the life experiences of the same person.

Based on the examples of hostile representations of perceived migrant others in the context of political campaigns in Switzerland, I will now move on to disentangling dimensions of violence that are at play and their effects on the persons and groups they target. In doing so, I will draw on the theoretical approaches to violence introduced above as well as some recent contributions to the study of gendered violence in migration contexts. Applying theories of violence bolsters the critique of essentializing and ultimately harmful representations of migrants. Using theories of violence as an analytical entry point contributes to reflexivity by shedding light on the harmful workings and effects of hostile representation of perceived migrant others.

13.4 Focusing Gendered Violence in Migration Contexts as an Avenue Towards More Reflexivity

The forms of violence at play in all three anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant campaigns are far from causing physical harm, yet they are profoundly damaging. By fuelling what Dahinden and Manser-Egli (2021) refer to as gendernativism, the poster campaigns reflect instances of liberal violence (Isakjee et al., 2020). They promote a gendered and racialized form of xenophobia, which rests on the belief that certain foreign others are culturally incompatible with egalitarian, Swiss natives. According to such beliefs, Muslim immigrant populations across Europe have brought with them a backward and archaic image of women. As a result, face veils are directly linked with migration and are seen as a form of repression and a contradiction to gender equality. Conversely, the Swiss nation is seen as being made up of free and equal citizens. The juxtaposition between ‘oriental’ and ‘liberal’ gender relations is reiterated by the gendered image that supports the ‘yes’ campaign of the Enforcement Initiative in which the foreign male is shown in connection with rape.

Both anti-Muslim campaigns mobilise stereotypes in the sense that they reduce Switzerland’s Muslim population to certain simplified but exaggerated traits: male chauvinism, violence and threat. In this way, the stereotypical representations essentialize, naturalize and fix difference with the aim of drawing a clear boundary between “the normal and the acceptable (and) the abnormal and the unacceptable” (Hall, 1997, p. 258). Ascriptions of violence coupled with gendered attributes are used to mark the abnormal and unacceptable. Such instances of symbolic exclusion build on and contribute to perpetuating historical power imbalances which may—as is the case here—crystallize in stereotypical representations of an inherently violent and male-dominated Muslim other (Dietze, 2016).

The racist, gendered imagery mobilized in the context of the three referenda exemplifies how simplistic links between gender, migration and violence may play out in exclusionary politics on the ground. The way violence, gender and migration are conflated is violent in itself. It ascribes certain reductionist and negative attributes to entire population groups that are deemed incompatible with the western value hemisphere of which Switzerland is believed to form part. Such value-laden categorizations build on and contribute to reproducing human hierarchies and the discriminatory migrant/citizen binaries (Anderson, 2019) deriving from them. Applying the prism of cultural violence (Galtung, 1990), we can identify a normalized power hierarchy that determines what kind of violence is made visible and addressed in public debates and through political practice. The examples presented thus underline the hegemonic nature of representations, preconceptions and associated political claims-making.

It is precisely this hegemony of representations that contributes to diverting attention from systemic causes of violence and from the positionality of those presented as victims. Structural violence in terms of unequal power relations and unequal life chances (Galtung, 1969) is integral to the examples introduced in the

previous section. It provides a basis for stereotypical and culturalizing images of perceived others, which contribute to retaining the migrant/citizen divide (Anderson, 2019; Menjívar & Drysdale Walsh, 2019; Crul and Lelie, Chap. 11, this volume; Mazzucato, Chap. 12, this volume). The assumption that some allegedly autochthonous lives are more valuable than the lives of perceived strangers (Butler, 2006) is deeply inherent in this divide. Violence is represented as a manifestation of gendered inequalities that are related to Islam or ethnic origin, while systemic causes of violence are systematically eclipsed (see Askola, 2007). By systemic causes I mean the normalized but essentializing perceptions of migrant 'others' that are instrumentalized as political capital and have important consequences for the everyday living conditions of large population groups. The latter includes Muslims in Switzerland, regardless of whether or not they are Swiss citizens. At the same time, the examples presented also highlight instances of epistemic violence and thus exemplify Scheper-Hughes and Bourgeois' observation that violence gives birth to itself (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgeois, 2004).

The implicit juxtaposition of those perceived as malign outsiders with hegemonic and racialized images of femininity (Esposito et al., 2020) eclipses the fact that there are myriad counter-narratives to these images. These counter-narratives disappear behind the salience of hostile images in public spaces and the political repercussions they help to generate. Such observations also allude to Butler's engagement with vulnerability and its uneven distribution (Butler, 2006). In this case, however, vulnerability works as a top-down notion, which leaves no room for individual conceptions of self. Strategic use of images, as in these examples, is inherently violent. By reinforcing stereotypes about Muslim women as veiled victims, discursive techniques and practices contribute to constructing gender and violence as engendered (see also Andrijasevic, 2007). In fact, vulnerability turns into a manifestation of epistemic violence in the sense that it is being imposed on women who are perceived as victims of their culture. Returning to Butler, it is therefore the vulnerability to epistemic violence that is unevenly distributed. However, using violence as an analytical entry point also enables us to move beyond the dichotomy of female victims and male perpetrators and to uncover the conditions in which essentializing beliefs are rooted and from which they derive their symbolic power.

All three campaigns promote gendered and gendering representations of migrants as victims or perpetrators, which are particularly prevalent in non-academic realms. Such representations provide, for instance, fertile ground for migration policies that are based on culturalizing and racializing conceptions of 'us' and 'them'. Policies and legal clauses may in turn promote a convergence of epistemic and structural violence and downplay the fact that, in many cases, the legal status of migrants or their ascribed position as perpetual outsider constitutes the primary source of injustice and violence (see also Pérez, 2012). Consequently, other manifestations and effects of gendered violence, including their enabling conditions, have no repercussions on public media and instances of migration governance. As a result of the hegemonic nature of gendered and racialized migrant images, the instances of structural and epistemic violence at play remain invisible. Invisibility, in turn, promotes inaction, which constitutes a form of violence on its own (Scheper-Hughes, 2004;

Davies et al., 2017). There is therefore a need to identify and highlight the diversity of settings at which violence occurs and the various actors involved (Freedman, 2016). This enables us to discern how certain forms of governance or the lack thereof facilitate violence or do not prevent it from happening.

The analysis of Islamophobic political campaigns in Switzerland highlights different dimensions of violence while also drawing attention to histories and politics of citizenship, which determine the context-specific interplay of different dimensions of violence. On the one hand, the experiences of Muslim women in Switzerland are strongly shaped by the structural violence of the Swiss and European border and citizenship regimes (Kristol & Dahinden, 2020; Plümecke et al., 2022). On the other hand, recent research demonstrates how ideas of gender equality and women's rights have been mobilized in nativist and nationalist politics in Europe as boundary markers against migrants and Muslim women in particular (Fischer & Dahinden, 2017; Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009; Gianni & Clavier, 2012). At the same time, gender equality and women's rights are not only presented as accomplished facts in Switzerland, but even as genuine Swiss values. This discursive logic enables a portrayal of Muslim others as an illiberal threat to Swiss society because their alleged lack of respect for women's rights and gender equality is immutably related to their 'culture' (Lépinard, 2020). At the same time, migrant and Muslim women themselves rarely have a voice in this debate, at least in Switzerland. They are silenced and thus subjected to epistemic violence. "White middle-class feminism", as Grisard et al. (2022, p. 12) note, "perpetuates this violence, often too invested in upholding the 'master's house' (Lorde, 1984) instead of dismantling it in solidarity and coalition".

13.5 Conclusion

Reflexivity is much about our standpoint as scholars (see Chap. 1, introduction to the volume). It is about what we say, and it is also about what we do not say. This contribution seeks to encourage scholars to more explicitly highlight the double standards at play in hostile representations of persons perceived as migrants. Drawing on gendered images of violent migrant villains that were used as part of political campaigns in Switzerland, I have argued that it is important to go beyond the violent individual depicted and acknowledge the violence inherent to the making and the public display of such images. Whether or not we acknowledge the latter as an act of violence, depends on our theoretical and political standpoint as well as on the audience we strive to address as scholars.

Shifting the focus away from migrants themselves and their alleged attributes and demands helps us to illuminate the broader conditions that both produce and govern subjectivities. Such forms of subjectification and othering are inherently violent. At the same time, stereotypical representations of allegedly violent 'strangers' divert attention from where violence is actually happening. However, such hidden instances of violence can only be uncovered as such if the notion of violence

employed is sufficiently encompassing. Drawing on theories of structural, cultural (Galtung, 1969, 1990) and epistemological violence (Spivak, 1988), indifference as a form of violence (Scheper-Hughes, 2004) as well as the violence of abandonment and inaction (Davies et al., 2017) enables us to expose multiple articulations of violence in migration-related contexts that are not necessarily discussed as such. This analytical lens thus promotes a more comprehensive understanding of gendered violence in connection with migration. It shifts the focus away from the gendered migrant as either victim or perpetrator, as it zooms in on the violence of gendering and migrantizing (Dahinden, 2016) persons and its consequences. It exposes culturalizing conceptions of migrants as violent in themselves: at an epistemological level, at the level of public discourse and at the level of concrete migration policies.

What does a focus on violence add to more reflexivity in the study of migration and why do we need violence as an analytical prism? One answer to this question is that violence is harmful and destructive. Even if it does not involve physical injury, violence leaves traces in human lives, for example through lasting trauma. At the same time, violence contributes to reproducing human hierarchies, meaning that certain lives are considered more valuable than others. Importantly, not only states are to be held accountable for violent action. State action certainly plays an important role, but so does public discourse. Researchers need to be careful not to contribute to or support exclusionary forms of governance and discriminatory othering such as the images employed as part of discriminatory campaigns in Switzerland. In order to avoid fuelling such discrimination by means of scientific analysis, researchers need to carefully consider how to frame research objectives, how to define our analytical points of departure, and how and to whom to disseminate findings. Using violence as analytical entry point enables researchers to show how other actors in the field of knowledge production use violence as a tool to ascribe certain threatening and unwanted attributes to those perceived as others and thus symbolically exclude them from society. Hence, using violence analytically can help to improve a general awareness of the potential harmfulness of certain beliefs and actions.

It is important to add that naming and criticizing instances of violence such as those featured in the political campaigns is a necessary first step towards ultimately dismantling it. However, so far this has been neglected by those engaging with the matter from a scientific perspective. While the institutionalized, systematic and ubiquitous nature of structural violence ties in with epistemic dimensions of violence to only allow certain voices to speak and be heard, scholars are faced with the task of promoting discursive shifts by producing not only alternative but also accessible forms of knowledge. The study of migration is embedded in wider societal relations and social scientists are actors in the struggles they describe. Obviously, however, they play very different roles in the way they relate to these struggles. At the same time, scholars are only one set of actors among many others that contribute to the production of knowledge on migration-related issues. In many cases, the scientific voice is confined to its echo chamber, while other actors have a much stronger bearing on public discourse and political decision-making. With respect to

migration and migration governance, this can be very problematic, as past and present developments in anti-immigration politics demonstrate.

Violence captures important dimensions of contemporary migration governance and its effects on the groups of migrants targeted. Using theories of violence as an analytical entry point urges us to acknowledge how damaging and harmful certain stereotypical representations are. A focus on violence does not only help us to better understand the dynamics behind the construction and workings of harmful images. It also sheds light on their consequences. Without aiming to be sensationalist, a focus on violence can amplify the urgency of rendering critical scientific perspectives political to pose a significant counterweight to the migrantizing impetus of public discourse. For this reason, scholars can build on notions of violence when acting as media experts, knowledge brokers, translators or policy consultants. Notions of violence can form part of powerful alternative narratives that replace ‘the migrant’ as a racialized, problematic figure with an analysis of the circumstances that created this migrant figure in the first place. As a concept, violence can be used to approach migration-related issues from new and reflexive angles and can help to rectify the problematic orientation of contemporary migration governance. Or, in Hacking’s words, “if new modes of description come into being, new possibilities for action come into being in consequence” (Hacking, 1999, p. 166).

This chapter thus prepares the ground for innovative and reflexive engagements with the multifaceted links between migration, gender and violence. Ultimately, it substantiates calls for the change of widely-held beliefs about differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and policies used to govern the presence of those perceived as foreign others. Such change of beliefs, however, requires scholars working on issues such as those discussed to disseminate the knowledge they produce to broader audiences and to explore new and innovative platforms for knowledge transfer.

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Chapter 14

Mixed Migration-Mobility Couples: Disrupting the Age-Old Marriage Between Migration and Culture



Kesi Mahendran

14.1 Introduction: A Divorce Proposal

This chapter begins with the proposal of a divorce; the uncoupling of the intimate relationship between migration and culture. This relationship between migration and culture constitutes an epistemic marriage, within the study of human migration across national borders, which is little more than a hundred years old. The proposal of a divorce proceeds through the articulation of a novel category—a new couple—the *mixed migration-mobility couple*. The category of mixed migration-mobility couple has begun to appear within interdisciplinary migration studies but rarely within my own discipline, Psychology. Within Psychology this couple exists below the radar both as an analytical category and a policy category. Yet, this ordinary couple, whether legally married or co-habiting, presents the possibility to reflexively interrogate many of the central assumptions and allegiances of contemporary migration studies. Such as the maintenance of a series of binaries between migrant/non-migrant, between the national/transnational, between stasis/mobility (Glick-Schiller & Çağlar, 2013). This couple have an avant-garde potential to reflexively ask, within migration studies, what epistemic, practical and state-centric purposes do such binaries serve.

It is generally accepted amongst migration scholars and social scientists that epistemic cleavages, and policy categories influence the public sphere and the arrangement of institutions. As such, epistemic cleavages and policy categories have real world consequences for people whose biographical stories do not fit into those categories. Couples with mixed backgrounds where one is migrant and the other non-migrant face insecurities in their daily life. Providing such couples with the epistemic support and security they need to actively engage in the world, requires

K. Mahendran (✉)
The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
e-mail: kesi.mahendran@open.ac.uk

migration scholars to bring about this epistemic divorce between migration and culture, migrant and non-migrant, stasis and mobility. Migration scholars, as this volume argues throughout, need to pause and reflexively consider what further dimensions and assumptions they intimately attach to the figure of the migrant. Humans are all increasingly on the move, from tourism, travelling to work, yet the figure of the migrant, in epistemic terms, is viewed as a moving figure, from the position of stasis, argues Nail, in what he terms a process of kinopolitics (Nail, 2015). Nail's central point is that this figure of a migrant is not an identity, or a person it is a "mobile social position" (Nail, 2015, p. 16). Therefore, this figure can relate as much to an abstract social relation as to the totemic individual who is counted as *migrant* within empirical studies. Nail's kinopolitics of movement, like Braidotti's earlier nomadic subjects (Braidotti, 1994), draws critical attention to the processes of figuration. Figuration is central to the dynamic co-authoring of concepts and categories that is occurring in migration studies even if the assumptions about the figures we create are not explicitly treated in our analysis, reports and publications.

To take up this reflexive challenge I write as a social and political psychologist focused on building public dialogue between citizens and states. The chapter aims to interrogate the assumptions of integration and acculturation studies as occurring within psychology and influence the terms of reference of migration policy, public attitudes on immigration and political nation-building exercises. Section 14.2, entitled *Welcome to the Host Society*, opens with the story of how the epistemic union between migration and culture first became associated together. It discusses how the figure of an acculturating migrant was conceived against a background of the *host society* with an evaluating public in the early twentieth century and has been sustained within migration studies ever since. It's worth underlining the point that from its inception the story of acculturating migrants always contained the gaze of an *evaluating public*, acting as the second protagonist in the on-going story of acculturation and integration studies.

Once the secrets of this epistemic marriage are laid-bare, Sect. 14.3, entitled *Creating an Epistemic Venue*, begins to explore the actual mixed mobility lived arrangements that migrants and non-migrants routinely have with each other. It does this by exploring recent lines of inquiry, which either emphasise the *mixed* status of these unions (Górny & Kępińska, 2004; Djurdjevic & Roca Girona, 2016; Crul et al., 2023) or their *cross-border* features (Andrikopoulos, 2021; Moret et al., 2021) or finally the *intimacies* created by sustained state regulatory and judicial gaze (Bonjour & De Hart, 2021).

Section 14.4, entitled *Insider & Outsider Couples*, draws two interviews from a database of 130 stimulus-led interviews within three studies referred to as the *Placing Ourselves* studies. Whilst terms such as cross-border couple or perhaps inter-bordered couple are immediately attractive to the critically or decolonising-minded reader, Sect. 14.4 makes the case for the more technocratic term mixed migration-mobility couple which although more technocratic serves to place this social position within the dynamics and continuities of the ten-position

Migration-Mobility Continuum (MMC). The MMC proposes a new lens which diffracts *all* individuals in a given nation-state as having degrees of migration and mobility.

Finally, the discussion section, entitled *Experiments in Figure and Ground*, broadens the discussion to explore the overall importance of the existence of mixed migration-mobility couples to theoretical developments within migration studies. It argues that the lives of such couples, if the focus is on both their evaluative role and the dynamics of their relationships, offer the potential to open up migration studies as a socio-political field. More studies into the hybrid realities of mixed couples, have the potential to bring our conception of the figure of the citizen closer to our conception of the figure of the migrant (Dahinden & Anderson, 2021). The chapter closes its contribution by considering how these mixed arrangements can be understood dialogically in ways that traverse our current categories in migration studies. A willingness to examine migration as divorced from its partner—culture—could be key to understanding human migration-mobility as an integral feature of social and technological transformation (Castles, 2010) within the twenty-first century.¹

14.2 Welcome to the Host Society: The Creation of the Marriage Between Migration and Culture

Before making the case for the dissolution of the relationship between migration and culture, it is worth investigating how the fascinating story of the union occurred. The central relationship which implicitly—or sometimes explicitly—frames migration studies within the European context is the relationship between incoming migrants and *receiving or host societies* (Ager & Strang, 2008; Echterhoff et al., 2019; Wessendorf & Phillimore, 2019). This is particularly the case within Psychology which has been mostly concerned with the question of acculturation (Berry, 2006). Within this approach migrants are reified and objectified as mobile and the concept of a *host society* is evoked almost as a proxy for control, governance and stability. The co-joining of *host* with *society*, though relatively unexamined with migration studies, immediately frames Nail's social relation around the figure of a migrant (introduced above) as within a guest/host arrangement as a figurative narrative frame—the receiver of hospitality. Where helping the *guest* is, rather counterintuitively, a downwards subordinating act. More seriously, particularly as integration remains a key concept for home, interior and justice ministries focused on

¹The author would like to thank the participants who took part in the three *Placing Ourselves* studies, as well as Nicola Magnusson, Anthony English and Sue Nieland (Public Dialogue Psychology Collaboratory) and Stephen Sawyer and Zona Zaric at the Centre for Critical Democracy Studies. She would also like to thank editors Janine Dahinden and Andreas Pott who offered careful detailed engagement with the arguments presented in this chapter. Finally, thanks to Adrian Favell and other colleagues within the IMISCOE Reflexivities Standing Committee, who provided comments within the meeting hosted by Open Psychology Research Centre, at the Chelsea Theatre, London, in 2023.

immigration across Europe, it locates the arrival, settlement and demand for integration of migrants as pivotal to the task of nation-state building (Favell, 2022). The unexamined concept of *host society* enables the nation-state to become politically mobilized as a self-contained sovereign autonomy and a bulwark against globalisation fears.

This self-contained—decidedly bordered—version of the host society, is what Willem Schinkel, in the Dutch context, calls a social imaginary of a *morally cleansed* good society (Schinkel, 2013). Equally, the affective positioning of migrants as incoming culturally deficit guests who require state assistance is what Aleksandra Ålund, in the Swedish context, termed affective culturalism (Ålund, 1999). Each year integration and acculturation studies involve the collection of individual-level integration data on competencies, employment, cultural-contact decision-making, citizenship, and acculturative stress all against the backdrop of an idealized unexamined imaginary of a *host society*. The imperatives of such studies assume the role of reciprocity and mutuality within implicit *golden mean* of the *right* amount of migration to avoid fragmented multi-ethnicity and promote social cohesion. Public opinion and social attitudes surveys routinely gather the views of the public on questions of immigration and integration, yet the public's own degree of migration (including having an intimate relationship with a migrant or non-migrant) is currently not explored at all within those public opinion and social attitudes studies. In terms of processes of figuration, reification and objectification these unexamined epistemic assumptions render the public as static (Mahendran et al., 2019).

14.2.1 *The Figure of an Acculturating Migrant*

The origins of the conflation between migration and culture is therefore best understood within the guest/host narrative frame used in the now over hundred years history of acculturation studies. The preoccupation with acculturation within migration studies can be dated back to 1906, when two scientists at the University of Chicago, William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, received \$50,000 dollars from the millionaire philanthropist Helen Culver and began what was to become a landmark five-book study, the *Polish Peasant in Europe and America*—published in 1918. Methodologically innovative, this study analysed letters, newspaper articles, and court documents exploring Americanisation and the processes of entering into the culture from the host country's perspective. What is of critical social psychological importance is that Thomas and Znaniecki in parallel also introduced the concept *attitude* and began one of the first articulations of the “social attitude”. Thomas and Znaniecki, locating their theoretical approach at the intersections of sociology and psychology, regarded the social attitude to be the psychological representations of societal and cultural influence.

Where early twentieth century experimental psychology had begun to explore individualised aptitude and adaptation, the idea of an *attitude* became central to social psychological studies, relating to an outward physical stance (drawn from use

of term attitude in painting and sculpture), and became, within social cognition psychology, a mental stance towards an object. By the 1930s the concept of attitude was described by Gordon Allport as “probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology. No other term appears more frequently in experimental and theoretical literature” (Allport, 1935, p. 798).

The widespread acceptance of the idea that people have “attitudes” was now engaged to the study of migrants and their acculturation. Creating a conception of the public as an attitudinal public, who could be assessed on their evaluations of migrants. The figure of the migrant was within the crosshairs of the technocratic gaze of an attitudinal European and North American public. A further development important to this story, is the 1951 Refugee Convention (Geneva). It placed the management of European refugees within the public domain, and crucially today, internationally this attitudinal public are incorporated into the governance role of evaluating the acculturating migrant’s progress (Mahendran et al., 2019). Today an entire epistemic and governance community designs studies or policy decisions with this figure (of a moving acculturating migrant) and ground (against a background of static attitudinal public) arrangement. The concrete objectification of refugees in small boats, or of migrants jumping the queue in waiting rooms outside busy under-resourced hospital wards, all work to objectify and anchor a social representation of the acculturating migrant against a backdrop of an attitudinal public seemingly preoccupied with replacement fears and welfare chauvinism. Combined with the concept of the *host society* this reifies a deficit model of the migrant—particularly of the refugee.

It may seem unusual that this marriage between migration and culture should make concrete this iconic lone figure, but marriages often do for example the breadwinner, the housewife. Today, acculturation studies continue to work with this figure of an acculturating migrant. One line of acculturation studies is focused on the degrees of integration of migrants, usually addressed in the form of metrics such as MIPEX which began as a convergence exercise within the European Union (Solano & Huddleston, 2020) or the UK’s Indicators of Integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). Echterhoff and colleagues frame their special issue entitled *the social psychology of forced migration and refugee integration* by setting out the latest UN figures on the scale of forced migration and explain that:

Thus, receiving societies, their policy-makers and residents have to reckon with the long-term arrival of refugees. From the perspective of a rational and morally committed observer, a key goal would be to balance the needs and interests of refugees and receiving-society members, ideally by creating win-win situations that ultimately secure and enhance the wellbeing of all groups and parties. (Echterhoff et al., 2019, p. 1337)

This oppositional framing assumes oppositional needs which must be balanced to create a win-win, the hidden polemic being that intergroup conflict could create a lose-lose. There is a psychologisation of the forced migration experience of arriving into host/receiving societies but crucially, within this framing, there is also an observer (perhaps, the migration scholar, the policy-maker) who is able to take a balanced and rational attitude in this vexed situation.

Today, acculturation studies tend to take as their departure point John Berry's acculturation fourfold model which articulated four strategies that are taken by incoming migrants—separation, integration, assimilation and marginalisation. These strategies correspond to decisions regarding one's own culture and the culture of the host society: to maintain one's own culture at the expense of the host culture is *separation*, to leave one's culture behind and adopt the new culture entirely would be *assimilation*, to lose one's own culture and also fail to successfully adopt the new culture would be *marginalisation* (Berry, 1997, 2001). Within this model *integration* is idealised as fourth carefully balanced approach of negotiating mutual accommodations of the culture of the host country and of the birth-country. There are undoubtedly difficulties with such essentialised notions of culture, yet this reified view of culture remains stubbornly persistent within acculturation studies. Though of course other epistemic communities exist within migration studies—in relation to context of arrival, categories of arrival, stocks, flows, management of migration—they work in parallel to acculturation and integration studies and do not challenge the epistemic marriage between migration and culture. Migration studies appears to implicitly or tacitly accept the inevitability of this marriage. Therefore the problematic framing of migrants as *carrying cultures* with them, like clothing, which they keep, combine or discard, is part of this unexamined relationship between migration and culture within the public sphere and within political discourse. The second half of this chapter, proposes a new dialogical psychology of migration, using an alternative lens which views all individuals within a given society as having *degrees of migration* along a migration-mobility continuum.

Acculturation, acculturative stress and attempts to establish acculturation metrics are gaining traction with funding bodies and now occur routinely within psychology and allied disciplines, both within national context and as comparative studies, brought together in handbooks (Berry, 2006) and in international journals—e.g., the international journal of intercultural relations. Psychologists have argued that they have the potential to be a “hub science” and that they obtain a key role in international migration research: working at the individual level between social sciences and health sciences. As Schwarz proposes, “psychology, therefore, may serve as a ‘bridge’ between social science disciplines focusing largely on broader contextual processes and biomedical disciplines focusing largely on health outcomes”; psychology's task could be to articulate the mechanisms (the motivation to migrate), to elaborate acculturation and to synthesise these mechanisms via experimentation into models (Schwartz et al., 2022). It could be argued, that acculturation studies within migration studies have the potential to represent a progressive step, because they go beyond the human capital approaches which characterised the post-war years where migrants were understood either as guest workers or incomers who needed to be incorporated.

Hanna Zagefka and colleagues, reviewing 40 years of acculturation research, point out a few blind spots, in particular the continual one-sided focus on the migrant as minority, or on incoming groups and their strategies, actions and competencies (Zagefka et al., 2023). Within Zagefka's review the lens is focused not at more

mutual intercultural strategies but rather at a meta-level—namely the attitudes towards acculturation held by one group about the other group.

Examinations of mixed couples with differing degrees of migration and mobility, has the potential to disrupt the conflation between culture and migration because it does not fit easily into the intergroup framing of incoming migrants and host societies. The mixed migration-mobility couple is neither a member of the minority nor of the majority group but must traverse both groups or stand apart from them. There are two routes to make the necessary epistemic space for this mixed couple. The first relates to dialogical studies which go *inside* the binary. These have engaged in a sustained critique on the intergroup assumptions of acculturation studies. Whilst there is not the space to delve to deeply into them here, such dialogical studies, draw on the dialogical self-concept to propose a more hybrid multi-positional account of the figure of the acculturating migrant rather than adopt separatist, integrationist or assimilationist strategies. Here, people whatever their degree of migration, typically draw on intersubjective encounters to creating multiple identifications (Deaux & Verkuyten, 2014). The second route is to place the mixed couple as challenging the binary from *outside* in ways that reframe the attitudinal gaze of committed migration scholars (whether observer or engaged), the public and policy-makers. This is important, because, as Moret, Andrikouplous and Dahinden point out, “the logic of the nation-state influences how cross-border marriages are framed, discursively constructed and politically controlled” (Moret et al., 2021, p. 329).

14.3 Creating an Epistemic Venue: Mixed Marriages, Cross-Border Couples and Intimate Citizenship

The central task in this section is to create the necessary epistemic venue as a space to explore the mixed migration-mobility couple (for ease referred to as mixed-MM-couple) and its analytical potential for migration studies, policy, categories of practice and political discourse. The section explores existing studies and concepts relating to couples who have mixed migration-mobility. Before we can consider such concepts, it is worth beginning to reframe migration itself as less of a problem and more of a phenomenon. This reframing of migration itself is more in line with the everyday relationships that occur between people with different migration-mobility stories where one is born in the country of residence and the other is born elsewhere. Undoubtedly within the European context, acculturation and integration studies overwhelmingly frame levels of migration as a problem. The articles, special issues, and conferences typically open with stark increases in UNHCR figures where the relatively short time frame (often less than a decade) combined with the conflation between all forms of migration with refugee-related movements serves to present the movement of people as highly problematised—as a migration crisis. Studies which draw upon wider statistics such as OECD data, or IOM data, though they broaden to include economic migration still present migration as on the increase

and problematic. Political discourses—whether operating with a conservative protectionist frame of tightening national borders or with a progressive more liberal frame of tackling the root causes of migration in the first place—see migration as a problem rather than phenomena related to social and technological transformation.

Existing lines of inquiry into couples where one person is host-country born and the other is foreign-born currently focus on three dimensions, their *mixedness*, the *cross-border* process or the *intimacies* of their citizenship under conditions of regulation and surveillance. Górný and Keçińska (2004) approach the phenomenon with an economic rational choice approach. They show how structural relations between Ukraine and Poland have informed the increase in Polish-Ukrainian mixed marriages. They examine mixed marriages from mostly former Soviet countries within Poland. Significantly for this analysis, mixed marriage couples occupy a unique social relation within settled migration within Poland as it is relatively difficult to obtain Polish citizenship status. 40% of mixed marriages which are cross-national mixed marriages, rather than mixed ethnicity or religion, consist of one partner being from the former Soviet Union. Focusing specifically on Polish-Ukrainian marriages, Górný and Keçińska point to the rational-economic benefits and a better quality of life for the partners who marry a Polish citizen. Exploring factors such as age and gender, the qualitative interview data showed that Ukrainians often met their Polish partners on work trips within Poland, as seasonal workers, traders and professionals. Górný and Keçińska's study is an important precursor to the current movement of Ukrainian citizens into Poland and subsequent studies have drawn out further the gendered implications of mixed marriages around challenges to ideas of masculinity (Leutloff-Grandits, 2021).

Much of the existing research into mixed marriages is focused on the acculturation challenges or else suspicious state gaze on the migrant marital spouse. However, Djurdjevic and Roca Girona (2016) use the term *intermarriage* to articulate such marriages from the perspective of the resident partner as exemplars of cosmopolitanism—and as transformative. In their work migrants become repositioned as social-political beings, their analysis combines the “individual agency of migrant subjects”, with the “the issue of increased self-reflexiveness and self-problematisation among native-born subjects” (Djurdjevic & Roca Girona, 2016, p. 391). They propose a form of romantic essentialisation where the ethnicity of the migrant partner is essentialised in positive terms by the native-born spouse. Their dialogical study is useful in pointing to the evaluative capacity and greater self-reflection of this mixed couple and their capacity to engage in critical questioning of the ethnic and national norms of their country of residence. Djurdjevic and Roca Girona conclude “cross-border love has shown to be an accurate background for viewing micro-dimensions of critical cosmopolitanism” (*ibid.*, p. 400). Maurice Crul and colleagues focus a little more on the citizen's couple perspective but in contrast to cosmopolitanism point to the risk of a whitening of the couple (Crul et al., 2023). Exploring the bi-directional impact of a mixed union, Crul and colleagues within their six country Becoming a Migrant (BaM) project place the emphasis on what role mixing plays in the assimilation of the couple. They ask whether mixing within the asymmetries of minority/majority arrangements have a whitening effect in their sample or a

diversifying effect. Crul et al. find results vary according to social circles and whether the couple are a mix of first generation and second generation, they conclude however “that the primarily uni-directional notion of assimilation, with the migrant partner doing all the adapting, is questionable. We see an equally strong trend going in the other direction. We therefore argue for an approach that takes a potential bi-directional impact into account” (Crul et al., 2023).

Perhaps the term which has gained the most traction within migration studies is *cross-border marriage* with studies occurring within the European context and the Asian context, in relation to power, conflict and other asymmetries between the two partners (Choi & Cheung, 2017). Moret et al. (2021) in framing their special issue on cross-border marriages point to the extent to which state interest in such marriages has shaped the contours of scholarly engagement. Cross-border couples are particularly vulnerable to the conflation of migration and culture and the protectionist nation-state logic argued in the first part of this chapter. This vulnerability relates to both the way they are instrumentalised discursively to help the nation state define themselves and equally in the more direct sense of the state assessing the legitimacy and quality of the couple’s relationship. Studies into cross-border marriages need to be alive to these dynamics. In particular, the politicisation of cross-border marriages challenges the idea of the good citizen and also of the good family—in choosing to marry an outsider. Such couples continually experience bordering practices, in relation to visa, checks, schooling and state interference. Moret and colleagues delineate between studies focused on the “normative mechanisms behind legislations and policies” which “are almost by definition reflexive regarding the categories institutionalised by states” and studies focusing on couples’ experiences, which “are not always as reflexive” (Moret et al., 2021, p. 329).

Citizenship status provides an important critical-legal means of exploring cross-border relationships. Bonjour and de Hart in their Special Issue focus on mixed-status families and how the conflicting demands on them causes them to perform a form of intimate citizenship. While Moret et al. argue that cross-border marriages can reify nation-state practices, Bonjour and de Hart propose, within the EU context, that it becomes hard to decipher “what is national about national discourse” (Bonjour & De Hart, 2021, p. 12). According to them what holds experiences together is the development of a form of intimate citizenship in the face of intrusions from multi-level governance and the positioning of one member of the partnership as the *citizen sponsor*.

Much of the existing sociological and social geography literature points to Williams’ (2010) landmark survey of cross-border marriages within a global context. Foregrounding agency within the decision-making of the two individuals, Williams explains that marriage migration is integral to many transnational communities, that have established themselves in many countries in the world. Equally, the different citizenship status of the two individuals creates an important tension within the relationship wherever they choose or must live. Williams’ studies have concentrated mainly on the experience of the non-citizen in the relationship. Their status as dependent and not as citizen but as the aforementioned *migrant spouse* creates key restrictions and insecurities—not least a lack of recognition outside the

relationship. Other terms Williams mentions are spouse migration and family-forming migration—both of which emphasise the cross-fertilisation between studies into cross-border migration and the broader study of family migration. The strength of this term is that it removes the cultural essentialism, however, it replaces this with an emphasis on border crossing.

14.3.1 *Insider-Outsider Dynamics and Mixed Couples*

Of analytical value within cross-border or mixed-couples, as Williams draws attention to, is the mix of *insider* and *outsider* that the couple represents. In this respect the shifts in power relations that occur within the trajectories of such mixed marriages may shed sociological light on power relations more generally between married life and migrant life. For example, women with reduced status in patriarchal contexts take advantage of their transnational community and marry into another country and a higher status and prospects. Equally, couples may move to a third country to raise their children in the religion of their choice where that religion could result in stigma within their respective countries of origin. Shuko Takeshita has studied marriage in a number of contexts, where one partner is Japanese, and has shown that in Muslim/non-Muslim marriages between Japanese and Pakistani individuals the family has moved to a Muslim country to improve outcomes for their children, opening up the field of transnational social space (Takeshita, 2008). Using the term *intermarried families*, Takeshita has studied Japanese-Turkish couples as well as Japanese-Brazilian couples. Takeshita develops an important understanding of decision-making around mixedness and use of transnational space as social capital (Takeshita, 2016). This line of inquiry which examines both migration and culture (but does not conflate them) is potentially important to understanding migration more dispassionately as a phenomenon rather than a normative problem for an imagined host society.

Apostolos Andrikopoulos (2021, and in relation to kinship categories, in this volume) has gone further into these insider and outsider dynamics of kinship categories, by concentrating ethnographic work onto the sorts of marriages which are often understood by authorities to be sham/fake marriages—i.e. those between individuals from African countries married to EU citizens. Focused specifically on non-Dutch EU citizens in marriages with Ghanaian and Nigerian men, Andrikopoulos openly explores his own biases in assumptions about agency, desire and the genuineness of the relationships. From this reflexive starting point he delineates an over-sharp distinction between love and material interests. A genuine marriage in this context must show no signs of material interest which contrasts sharply with the economic rational-choice frame found in other studies such as Górný and Kępińska's (2004) above. Such starkly different framings of mixed marriages within European context point to the role of racialisation and racism within the framing of couples as sham/fake and, more broadly, the role of intersections between race, racism and migration studies (Khazaei, Chap. 9, this volume) as well as the failure to name

racism explicitly (as Raghuram and Sondhi, Chap. 6 point out in this volume “coloniality manifests in epistemic authority”).

Creating a new epistemic venue for the mixed-MM-couple requires an appreciation of the extent to which such mixed unions exist enmeshed within racial capital, economic capital and international relations. To get close to an analytical examination of this phenomenon requires a de-problematisation of migration, a de-politicisation of integration and to recognise that there are analytical lenses that hold migrants and citizens together—it is this challenge the chapter now turns to.

14.4 Insider-Outsider Couples: MMC3

The final section explores what happens when migration is divorced from culture, so much so that questions of culture and ethnicity are not even asked of participants. Instead, participants across whole populations ranging from migrant to generationally non-mobile are asked about their migration-mobility stories and also about the topics of migration, integration and citizenship. This has occurred across three studies which began in 2008 and were completed in 2019, together referred to as the *Placing Ourselves* studies (Mahendran, 2013, 2018; Mahendran et al., 2023). The three empirical studies concentrate mainly on Scotland and Sweden, but also include England, Ireland and Germany. Over 130 people have participated in in-depth qualitative interviews, moving across key events the first study (2007–2009) gathered data before the global recession, the second one (2012–2013) before Brexit reverberated across Europe and the third study (2019) was cut short by the global Covid-19 pandemic. By asking all participants the same questions about integration and citizenship irrespective of their degree of migration, it becomes clear the extent to which notions of acculturation and integration become idealised processes which place demands on migrants, which though they may be central to nation-state myth-making (Favell et al., 2023) are not realistic for people whether migrant or non-migrant.

The study involved interviews (average 90 min), which were face to face and had a three-part structure: part one was an open stem-completion task, such as *I am...*, or *I am a part of...* or *a citizen is...* or, in the final study, *the world is...* In the second part the interviewees were asked six questions which enabled them to be placed on a Migration-Mobility Continuum (MMC), outlined below. The six questions ask the extent to which they had moved, left the city and returned, whether they felt on the outside, whether they were settled or would move again/move for the first time. In the final section participants were then brought into dialogue with stimulus-materials, such as the EU Common Basic Principle that integration is a two-way process of mutual accommodation, or and in the final study António Guterres’ address to the UN on multilateralism.

14.4.1 Ten Positions Along the Migration-Mobility Continuum

Once answers to the six questions are analysed, participants’ degrees of migration-mobility are placed along ten positions. In position 1, the interviewee, alongside their parents/grandparents are from the city and have not moved—generational non-mobility. In position 2, the participant is born in the city, and their parents or grandparents are migrants. This position is often referred to as second generation on third generation migrants within European migration studies and European political discourse. In position 3, a non-migrant is married/in a relationship with a migrant, which we found to influence views on integration and citizenship and is outlined the central preoccupation of this chapter. Position 4 is the returnee position, where participants have moved away and then returned to their country of origin. Position 5 and 6 refer to internal migration e.g. from Scotland to England, where in Position 5, the person is now settled, and in Position 6 they imagine they could move again.

The higher mobility positions (7–10) relate to the key question of *are you settled, or do you think you will move again/move for the first time*. In position 7, people had moved once and described themselves as settled at the time of the interview. In position 8, they had moved several times and were also settled at the time of interview. Finally, some migrants intended to return to their birth-country (position 9) or retained a mobility imaginary, articulating a move onwards to a new imagined or planned place (position 10). Those who were placed in position 10 are referred to as serial migrants (see Fig. 14.1). The MMC should not be understood as a static typology or rigid taxonomy but as an analytical prism which diffracts migration and its relationship to mobility and culture is absent from the analysis. Ten positions are currently articulated, but, logically of course, there are further positions. Furthermore, people can change position over time.

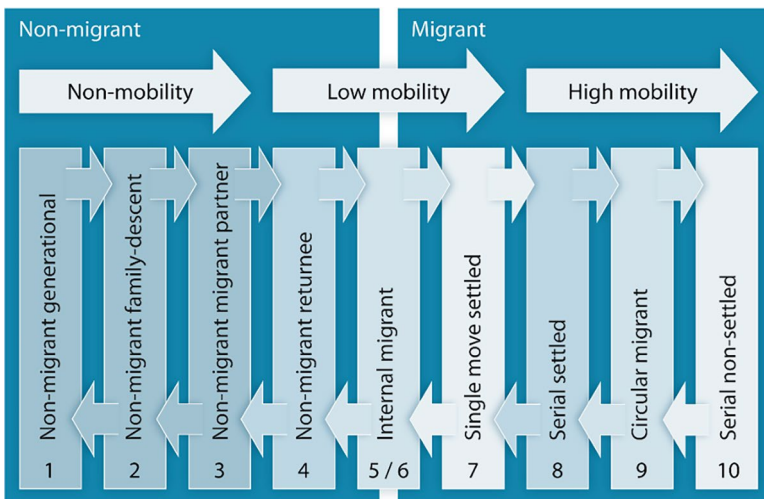


Fig. 14.1 The 10-point Migration-Mobility Continuum (Mahendran, 2017)

Across the entire dataset there were four cases of participants who were in mixed migration-mobility couples and the two cases selected below were selected because they are participants where the interviewee is married or co-habiting with a migrant, in both cases the migrant is not an EU citizen.

Case One: Future Possibility—Quinn Jameson

Quinn Jameson can be understood as moving between MMC3 (he was married, is now divorced and is living with his girlfriend who is from a European but non-EU country), and MMC4 (having evoked earlier in the interview his time living in Holland). He is asked by the researcher why he has returned and stayed in Scotland.

Extract 1

Quinn Jameson: Well, I'm, my mother is probably another reason. Erm, I've two brothers, one lives in Boston, the other one lives just, an hour and a half outside of Sydney [Okay] So part of me is like 'okay' (I'll) hang around and erm be here for, be here for her cause she needs me to be around here but you know, erm, but yeah so I think I have, I have a bit of a sense of (.) you know I shouldn't really (.) bugger off and leave her on her own (laughs). [...] As I say I would have liked to and there was a time when I was really kind of, I had really kind of itchy feet and wanted to try and live abroad but (.) erm, my wife wasn't keen on the idea (.) erm (.) She's never lived outside Edinburgh (.) and never lived more than a couple of miles away from her parents and she, you know, she didn't like the idea of going to a country where she couldn't speak the language and would potentially be alone for a large part of the time when I was working, or, or, or whatever. Erm (.) So (.) it just [never] got off the ground really.

Quinn Jameson, reflects on his relationship with his first wife, comparing their respective migration-mobility, having lived in Holland as a child, and then returned to Edinburgh. He begins the interview in MMC4, contrasting his mobility experiences with a wife in MMC1, generational non-mobility. He locates his own adult non-mobility, by taking up an I-brother position, contrasting it with two brothers who both live abroad. The researcher asks a future-orientated question.

Extract 2

Researcher: In a future time as you said perhaps when your son's grown. Do you think you'd ever consider moving on from, from Edinburgh and from Scotland?

Quinn Jameson: Yeah absolutely. No doubt in my mind. If I felt, found if there was a job opportunity or (.) erm, well I think it would have to be a job opportunity [...] Erm, although you know, if (.) I mean my girlfriend is from (names country). She has been here for, 13 or 14 years. Who know what might happen with Brexit [...]. Her sister is here she'll probably go back in a year and half when she's finished her medical studies, when she's qualified as a consultant, you know she'll go back to [names European country]. The pair of them are, they're orphans, both their parents have died, so they're very very close so [...] so she might go back. I might go over there with her. Alternatively, the pair of us might decide that we wanted to go somewhere else together [...] I'm certainly not

saying I'm here for the rest of my life. (Quinn Jameson, Study Three, Edinburgh, MMC3)

What is striking about Quinn Jameson's position is the extent, aged 48 at the time of the interview, he feels able to project to future moves, to his partner's birth-country but possibly also to another country. To fully understand his positions, is to understand him as a dialogical self, authoring a series of I-positional moves, from young man to the middle-aged son of an aging mother (ambivalence about leaving), to a divorcee from a wife with no history of mobility, to a partner now within a *mixed-MM-couple*, to someone whose freedoms are limited by the UK's Brexit decision. Such dynamics create new horizons within his own future migration with his girlfriend as well as interpolate his attitudes towards migration as a phenomenon.

Case Two: I-Positions and Outsideness Within the Dialogical Self—Olga Uchiyama

Bakhtin's concept of *outsideness* is a useful analytical concept to understanding a form of relational solidarity found within the intimacies of mixed-MM-couples. Outsideness unlike empathy is a two-step process, where we stand beside the other (rather than take their position) and then return to the self and act for the other person. Bakhtin argued that we must risk the act of being on the outside; we do not experience the other's position (Morson & Emerson, 1990). *Olga Uchiyama* in extract 3, articulates her ideals around an imagined world where people move not because they have to but because they want to, for relationships, for their work, or for adventure.

Extract 3

Olga Uchiyama: If the world was an ideal place, without wars, hungers or politicians only looking after themselves instead of the people, then we wouldn't need borders. People would feel the need to move away from their home, only if they wanted to, for example if they met a partner from another country, got a job somewhere else, or simply were curious about another country. (Olga Uchiyama, Study Three, Stockholm, MMC3).

Olga, born in Sweden, has lived in several countries, in several continents, she spent a long period in Japan and married a Japanese man, on having children she returned to Sweden. When asked if she was settled or might move again, she projected forward to a time when they may live in Japan so the children could fully immerse into the Japanese culture.

Extract 4

Olga Uchiyama: So, I could perhaps consider moving there [Japan] for like two or three years so that the girls get their basics, so to speak. It's not enough just having Japanese at home only at home with a Japanese father and a Swedish mother who, I mean, I speak Japanese but it's far from perfect. So, their Japanese won't be as good if we live here [Sweden].

Researcher: So, when you think forward, you think of possibilities then?

Olga Uchiyama: Yeah. I mean thinking of my own experience because I moved to [names South American country] when I was two. That's around the age you

start talking. And then I moved back when I was six so thanks to that, the first language I spoke was Spanish. And thanks to that when I speak Spanish, I speak it with a (names country) accent still after all these years. So, in order to let my daughters, have the same basics so to speak of the Japanese language as I have with Spanish, it would be good to move to Japan [Researcher: Yes], to get the cultural embedding of the language, yeah] = Yeah, but if we're going to do that, it would have to be soon because it's better to do it before they're six years old. And I don't want to. (Laughter) I really don't want to. I don't want to. I don't mind going to Japan and stay there for like two or three months but I don't want to live there. (Olga Uchiyama, Study Three, Stockholm, MMC3)

Olga moves between a series of I-positions, projecting backwards and forwards to weigh her own desires to not live in Japan, against the other-directed *I-mother* position, she demonstrates an outsidersness to explore the cultural benefits for her daughters of having the language. In order to articulate her ambivalence around migration, she moves between the I-young-child position and her daughters at the same age. Suggesting the transformative benefits of having both languages. Here migration is less about acculturation into one country and more about transnational space and the benefits of increased social capital (Takeshita, 2016).

These two cases, drawn from studies using the MMC (Fig. 14.1) as a sampling frame, show the potential of a new dialogical psychology of migration, and its capacity to offer a thickened conception of human capacity for projection, imagination and decision-making. The empirical cases (bearing in mind both participants would be understood as static and non-migrant in most social attitudes surveys) serve to challenge the current parameters of migration studies which ask the public their attitudes towards immigration and in turn ask migrants acculturation questions about their integration competencies. Though terms such as mixed marriage or intimate citizenship establish the state-citizen relationship, such inter-bordered couples might be more likely to really make inroads into the decolonising potential (Raghuram and Sondhi, Chap. 6, in this volume; as an account of the treatment of respective power of each partner informed by critical race theory, see Crul and Lelie, Chap. 11, in this volume). The argument is that the term *mixed migration-mobility couple* whilst more technocratic serves to place this social position within the dynamics and continuities of the MMC. As both cases illustrate, the everyday reality of couples who have a mixed migration story is on-going and involves new horizons of possible migration.

14.5 Discussion: Experiments in Figure and Ground—The Transformatory Potential of Dialogical Approaches to Migration

Anderson in her dialogue with Dahinden, argues, “the distinction between ‘migrant’ and ‘citizen’ is crucial to the creation and governance of nation-states and their territorial borders” (Dahinden & Anderson, 2021). This chapter has presented the case for the divorce between migration and culture and the potential benefits of treating migration-mobility alone, as a matter of degree. It has introduced a new category of analysis—the mixed-MM-Couple—, demonstrating how in their mixedness, individuals within such couples understand belonging and imagine decisions about future migration. Future studies into mixed couples create a “daring in-between space” (Ponzoni et al., Chap. 3, this volume) for migration scholars and inventive policy-makers. For example, a strength of divorcing migration from culture is it would potentially enable migration scholars to look at race. As Faten Khazaei argues in this volume there are real risks in using the concept of culture to elide a treatment of race as a dimension to migration scholarship (Khazaei, Chap. 9, this volume).

Divorcing migration from culture requires new lenses on migration, which are appropriate to how the phenomenon is occurring today within a transnational space. Without an adequate theory of migration, studies which narrowly focus on acculturation may unconsciously adopt the industrialisation frame of the post-war era (Massey, 2023), or they risk continuing in using the logic used by Thomas and Znaniecki, in the early twentieth century. Acculturation studies rest on an assumption that migration is problematic and does not recognise that currently only 3.6% of the world’s population are international migrants (IOM, 2024), underneath this figure are relationships between couples with different migration stories. The post-modern utopia of a borderless world of mobility has not yet dawned, so that it still seems appropriate to focus on migration as a process based on inequality and discrimination, controlled and limited by states. Yet, our absence of appropriate theories of migration risk studies adopting cross-border assumptions as outmoded and lightweight as a twentieth century light blue paper airmail letter. Appropriate theories of migration require a willingness to abandon the sedentary bias in acculturation studies, as well as becoming reflexively aware of the extent to which acculturation studies assume a *public* in the sense of a rational observer who is assumed to take a protectionist attitude to migration, rather than being in an intimate relationship with a migrant. A key step for psychological studies into the phenomenon of migration is to examine it as connected to mobility. There is potential to diffract the ingroup/outgroup binaries of acculturation studies and move towards a continuum of positions, characterised by the dilemmas and existential possibilities occurring between belonging and detachment, movement and stasis, leaving and staying. The chapter aims to contribute to this process by articulating the category of mixed migration-mobility couple. The chapter contributes to the broader epistemic and ontological challenges for migration studies, discussed throughout this

volume—the articulation of new analytical categories. Such new analytical categories potentially form the basis of solidarities, new mobilisations and new epistemic communities within migration studies.

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Chapter 15

Kinship Theory and Migration Studies: Challenging Ethnocentrism, Normativity, and State-Centered Epistemologies



Apostolos Andrikopoulos

15.1 Introduction

In 2004, in a review of family migration research in Europe, Eleonore Kofman noted that “the study of family migration has been marginalized theoretically, methodologically and empirically” (Kofman, 2004, p. 243). She explained this neglect as the outcome of the dominance of economic models in migration research that placed paramount emphasis on the individual.¹ Since then, the popularity of these economic approaches has declined and the field of migration studies has grown and transformed. Interdisciplinary family migration research has significantly proliferated in Europe² and now covers a wide array of topics, particularly issues related to “marriage migration” (Kofman et al., 2011; Charsley, 2013; Bonjour & Kraler, 2015). Meanwhile, family-related migration has been subjected to increasingly restrictive regulations by European governments that prioritized it as a migration and integration policy issue. This heightened state interest in family migration has,

¹Indeed, Neoclassical economic models (e.g. Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969) interpreted migration as an individual cost-benefit decision. New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) criticized these approaches for their emphasis on the role of the individual and instead suggested that migration decisions are made by larger units such as families and households (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Stark & Lucas, 1988).

²Family migration research has not been equally marginalized across Europe. Since the 1980s, in countries where guest worker programs ended and family-based migration became increasingly common, scholarly attention to the topic has grown. In contrast, in other European countries with different migration histories—such as those in Southern Europe, where family migration was not historically considered a significant policy issue—research on the subject remains limited.

A. Andrikopoulos (✉)
University College London (UCL), London, UK
e-mail: a.andrikopoulos@ucl.ac.uk

in turn, fueled the expansion of research in the field. As the regulation of family-related migration required more knowledge for both policy implementation and critical analysis, family migration research gained recognition as a policy-relevant field of study. This recognition led to increased funding, either through national research councils or directly from state authorities commissioning research. It is not an exaggeration to say that today family migration research constitutes a subfield of migration studies in Europe.

Despite the fact that family aspects of migration have no longer been empirically marginalized, family migration research remains in certain regards undertheorized. More specifically, family migration research has not sufficiently problematized its core concepts: “family,” “kinship” and “marriage.” As Montero-Sieburth and Giralt noticed in a recent review of the literature on migrant families, “there is an urgent need for current migration research and literature to reformulate theoretical and methodological conceptualization and to redefine ‘family’ and ‘family practices’” (2021, p. 1). The lack of adequate theorization of key notions in family migration research is not only a problem of migration scholarship in Europe. Other fields of migration research, such as studies of migrant networks in North America, have also employed the notions of kinship and the family without adequately scrutinizing them. Although there are increasingly many exceptions, there is a persistent tendency in studies of migration to rely on categories of practice and not on analytic categories of kinship and the family. In other words, migration researchers often employ notions of kinship, as these are used by people and institutions in the social worlds they study. These are descriptive categories that should have been treated as objects of analysis. Instead, researchers have tended to use them as frames of analysis, which has resulted in certain pitfalls.³ The problematic implications of relying on categories of practice is that they can too easily lead researchers to reproduce (a) ethnocentrism, when researchers rely on their own understandings of kinship categories and more generally what kinship is; (b) state-centered epistemologies, when researchers uncritically use state categories of marriage and the family; and (c) normative assumptions about the family and family relations that differ from family practices, when researchers rely on their research participants’ (and their own) normative conceptions of kinship.

Considering these problematic implications, this chapter argues that a closer engagement with kinship theory could help migration researchers conceptualize kinship relations and their entanglement with practices of mobility and migration. Anthropologists of kinship have for many decades addressed questions of epistemology in their field and particularly the Eurocentric foundations of kinship theory

³Of course, only using analytic categories cannot provide solutions to the pitfalls of the categories of practice. After all, there is no clear separation between categories of practice and categories of analysis, as the one often informs the other (Bourdieu, 1977; see also Dahinden, 2016; Moret et al., 2021). Additionally, analytic concepts may appear to be generic and cross-culturally applicable but their abstraction and specificity is very much a product of the settings in which they have been created (Narotzky, 2007). This is problematic in a globally unequal world where social theory and its tools of analysis have been overwhelmingly produced in the academic centers of the global North.

(Schneider, 1984; Carsten, 2000; Franklin & McKinnon, 2001). The critique of the study of kinship sowed the seeds of other critical inquiries. Feminist and queer theorists drew inspiration from the critique of kinship studies to theorize the socially constructed character of gender and sexuality and to challenge heteropatriarchal norms (Collier & Yanagisako, 1987; Butler, 1990; Yanagisako & Delaney, 1995). But the critique of the study of kinship also laid the groundwork for the postmodern “Cultural Critique” that more explicitly addressed politics in knowledge production and asserted that all truths are partial and incomplete (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). These critiques have been seminal for the study of migration and helped scholars to rigorously scrutinize categories used in migration research: from foundational categories, such as “migration” (Dahinden, 2016), “mobility” (Sheller & Urry, 2006) and the “nation-state” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), to other key notions in migration analysis, such as “culture” (Baumann, 1996), “race” (Wade, 2007), “ethnicity” (Wimmer, 2009), “gender” (Nawyn, 2010) and “sexuality” (Mai & King, 2009). Paradoxically, the category of “kinship” (and associated notions such as “family” and “marriage”) has not been subjected to a similar thorough scrutinization in migration studies and its meaning tends to be treated as self-evident by migration scholars. Like other endeavors in migration studies that interrogate the meaning of categories and the implications for knowledge production when they are adopted as analytic terms (for a review: Dahinden and Pott, Chap. 1, this volume), this chapter aims to contribute towards a reflexive analysis of the categories of “kinship,” “family,” and “marriage” (for similar efforts see: Strasser et al., 2009; Andrikopoulos & Duyvendak, 2020; Moret et al., 2021; Bonjour & Cleton, 2021). Inputs from the critique of kinship studies and recent developments in kinship theory will help migration researchers reflect about the use of kinship as a category in migration research and equip them with an analytical concept of kinship. Furthermore, this chapter engages with studies of transnational family life which have focused on the shifting family practices and malleability of kinship in transnational settings.

Studies of transnational migrant families have extensively documented the remarkable flexibility and adaptability of family structures within transnational contexts (Foner, 1997; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002). They have elucidated how kinship evolves in response to conditions shaped by global inequalities (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002; Coe, 2014; Trémon, 2017). Simultaneously, these studies have explored into the constraints inherent in treating kinship relationships as entirely fluid and adaptable, particularly in situations where rigid, essentialized notions of kinship regain relevance for migrants. This is especially evident when state-defined family criteria determine the right to migrate or when migrants, amidst growing precarity, seek stability and predictability (Drotbohm, 2009; Andrikopoulos, 2023; Geschiere, 2020). Insights derived from research on transnational kinship not only complement critiques of essentialism, ethnocentrism, and state-centered perspectives within migration studies but also point towards the potential for family migration research that reflexively addresses the shortcomings of prior approaches.

In the next section, I outline key developments in kinship studies over the last 50 years. My discussion centers on the seminal work of David Schneider, whose

critique of kinship studies uncovered the Eurocentric underpinnings of kinship research. Then I proceed with an analysis of how the notions of kinship and marriage have been used in the literature of migrant networks and marriage migration research. In the last section, I turn to transnational family research and discuss how studies of transnational family life have been attentive to the changing meanings and practices of kinship.

15.2 A Critique of/from Kinship Studies

According to the prevalent division of intellectual labor in Euro-American academia, anthropologists studied “kinship” in non-western societies without state organization, while sociologists studied “the family” in industrialized societies of the Global North. This division was premised on the assumption that kinship regulated all domains of life in so-called traditional societies while in so-called modern societies other institutions, such as the state and the market, stripped kinship of its broader socio-economic functions and limited its role to reproduction and therefore to its smaller unit, the nuclear family. At the core of anthropological inquiry, kinship used to have a privileged place within all traditions and schools of classic anthropology. At that time, in all schools of thought—but most clearly in the structural-functionalist model—kinship was seen as a system of ascription in which roles and statuses were fixed.⁴

Since the 1960s, however, anthropologists started raising critical questions about how the theorization of kinship has led to particular interpretations of social life. In an early critique, Ernest Gellner wondered under what conditions anthropologists categorized as “kinship” a social relation they observed in the field. Why was this relation not placed under other analytic categories such as politics or the economy? Gellner’s answer to this question was that anthropologists classified as kinship the relations that at least partially overlapped with their own conceptions of kinship. “[T]his is not primarily a discovery about societies,” he asserted, “but rather about the anthropologist’s use of terms” (1960, p. 188).⁵

The question of how kinship theory was informed by Euro-American folk understandings of kinship was further explored by the American anthropologist David Schneider. He argued that the study of kinship was premised on the principle that *blood is thicker than water*, which derived “directly and practically unaltered from the ethnoepistemology of European culture” (1984, p. 175). Kinship studies, in one way or another, approached kinship as a set of relations that stem from “natural

⁴Beyond anthropology, this was also a fundamental assumption in sociology and in social theory more generally (for a critical discussion: McKinnon, 2013; McKinnon & Cannell, 2013; Geschiere, 2020). It justified why sociologists studied nuclear families in modern societies which supposedly put more emphasis on achievement than on ascription. Sociological studies of kinship in the Global North focused mainly on rural populations and the urban poor.

⁵Edmund Leach (1966) and Rodney Needham (1971) expressed similar concerns.

facts.” Schneider critically examined these fundamental assumptions in the study of kinship and, as a result, challenged the very existence of kinship. For him, the existence of kinship was “in significant part a consequence of how it is understood and defined, and the definition does not, nor can it, arise solely as a consequence of ‘its’ real nature” (1984, p. vii). Exposing the ethnocentric bias in the development of kinship theory and the conceptualization of its core analytic tool, Schneider eventually maintained that the notion of kinship could not be universal and thus could not be a base for cross-cultural comparisons.

Many anthropologists anticipated that Schneider’s radical critique would kill kinship studies. Although today the study of kinship has lost its privileged position in anthropology, the epistemological critique of kinship studies resulted in the revitalization of the field and the development of more reflexive approaches to kinship. A new generation of anthropologists, intellectually influenced by feminism, took Schneider’s critique as a point of departure and contributed to a paradigmatic shift in kinship studies (Carsten, 2000; Franklin & McKinnon, 2001). Anthropologists who developed this new approach to kinship, known as “new kinship studies,” embraced Schneider’s critique of ethnocentrism in kinship theory but did not share his view that kinship cannot be a universal category of comparison. They asserted that a comparison of how people conceive kinship and the meaning they ascribe to it could be possible.

To differentiate from previous conceptualizations of kinship, new kinship studies scholars introduced novel concepts, such as “relatedness” (Carsten, 2000) and “mutuality of being” (Sahlins, 2013), that prioritized local understandings of how people see themselves as related and include all the ways of constituting intersubjective participation in the study of kinship. “[A]ll means of constituting kinship are in essence the same” and may range from commensality, mutual aid and shared experiences to adoption, marriage and procreation (Sahlins, 2013, p. 29). Moving away from previous interpretations of kinship as fixed, given and stable (kinship-as-being), new kinship studies conceived kinship in terms of practices and processes of becoming (kinship-as-doing) (McKinnon, 2016; Carsten, 2020). Their approach to kinship has been attentive to change, plasticity and innovation and open to all of the different ways people can be related.

Another important shift in new kinship studies was its abandonment of the division between modern and traditional societies and its expansion of research to societies in the Global North. Diverting from previous traditions of studying kinship in small, stateless societies where people had to rely on kinship for protection and survival, a new generation of anthropologists studied kinship in state-organized societies where the state had supposedly replaced the societal role of kinship. New research in these contexts challenged previously held assumptions that kinship had become less significant in the presence of the state, and documented the intricate entanglements of state with kinship. For instance, ethnographies of kinship in the Global North challenged the normative idea of citizenship as an institution of equality and explored how people navigate inequalities generated by the state and citizenship’s exclusionary side by relying and reviving kinship relations (Suerbaum & Richter-Devroe, 2022; Andrikopoulos, 2023).

State and kinship are no longer seen in opposition but rather as interrelated and mutually co-produced (Thelen & Alber, 2018). On the one hand, the nation-state is modeled after the family, relies on the affective force of kinship terminology to naturalize its relation to its citizens and is physically and symbolically reproduced through the families of its members (Delaney, 1995; Kahn, 2000). On the other hand, the family, as an institution, is validated and comes into existence through the state's official recognition (Bourdieu, 1996; Collier et al., 1997). Who is a family and what counts as a family are to a large extent products of the state's recognition. Same-sex partnerships, for example, are recognized in some countries, affording partners a range of family rights, including family migration rights, while in other countries such partnerships are not recognized or are even banned.⁶ Recognizing the interrelatedness of state and kinship sheds light on how state policies, such as immigration laws and citizenship regulations, can shape and influence kinship practices among migrants and their families.

The dynamic and inclusive approach to kinship advocated by new kinship studies, in combination with insights from studies on the intricate interplay between kinship and state politics, has the potential to enhance our understanding of mobility and migration. These conceptualizations of kinship capture the multifaceted role of kinship in migration processes, as well as the transformations and shifts of kinship in migratory and transnational contexts (Andrikopoulos & Duyvendak, 2020). By emphasizing kinship as practices and processes of becoming, these approaches align with the fluidity and complexity of migration experiences, where kinship ties may be renegotiated, reconfigured, or newly formed in response to changing social, cultural, and political contexts. Moreover, the inclusive approach of new kinship studies, which acknowledges diverse forms of relatedness, provides a more nuanced understanding of how migrants construct and maintain kinship networks based on various forms of affinity. Incorporating insights from new kinship studies can enrich our understanding of kinship dynamics in migration processes and contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of mobility and transnationalism.

The next section proceed with an exploration of how the notion of kinship has been used in studies of chain migration and migrant networks and outlines how the lack of an analytic concept led to particular limitations.

15.3 Kinship in Studies of Chain Migration and Migrant Networks

The modernity/tradition divide with kinship as a differentiation marker found its place in sociology through the influential work of Talcott Parson. According to his modernization hypothesis, kinship would lose its importance in modern societies

⁶ Forms of kinship and family life that divert from the state's definition of the family might even be sanctioned by the state.

due to the occupational and geographic mobility that characterized industrialization. A study by Litwak (1960) in the U.S. countered the validity of Parson's hypothesis. His findings showed not only that there was no decline in the cohesion of "extended family" but that, on the contrary, the new conditions of industrialism sustained this cohesiveness by assigning new roles to its members. Litwak also observed that the extended family, having survived geographic dispersal, facilitated the migration of its members. In times of economic and political hardship, individuals could rely on their relatives for financial and psychological help to migrate. Those who migrated established open lines of communication with their family members and transmitted information that assisted the migration of other family members (1960, p. 386). Later this process was described by sociologists and demographers as "chain migration" (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964; Tilly & Brown, 1967; Choldin, 1973). In studies of chain migration, kinship networks were generally seen as social infrastructure that connects migrants and non-migrants and facilitates the migration of relatives. These studies treated kinship as a pool of resources migrants can use to migrate and settle. "The vigor or kinship relations," Tilly and Brown asserted, "offers a means of extraordinary support" (1967, p. 143). Similarly, Choldin (1973, p. 169) concluded that for "all kinds of problems encountered by new migrants, kinfolk are by far the most important source of help."

Through these studies of chain migration, kinship acquired a place in migration research in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the approach of these studies to the meaning of kinship had certain limitations. Most often, migration researchers relied on Euro-American definitions of kinship and failed to analyze as kinship social relations that did not fall under their own ethnocentric understandings. Characteristically, some sociologists of migration classified as "fictive kinship" social relations that somehow resembled what they understood as kinship but that were a product of neither "biology" nor "marriage" (Li, 1977; Ebaugh & Curry, 2000). This categorization did not necessarily reflect how migrants themselves experience these relations and the importance they attach to them. Categories of "real" and "fictive" were rather projections of researchers' understandings of kinship and consequently of limited analytical value for the study of social relations in cross-cultural settings. Lacking an analytical conception of kinship attentive to cultural variation and change, migration researchers, who wanted to analyze the role of social relations in migration processes, had no other choice than to shift to other categories. Gradually the notion of "kinship" was displaced by other, broader notions such as "social capital" and "networks." Unfortunately, most of these studies employed the notion of "network" in a metaphorical sense without implementing social network analysis. This methodology could have helped researchers identify which relations are relevant for migrants and whether their significant relations overlap with what researchers understood as kinship (Ryan & Dahinden, 2021).

Although subsequently many studies of migration used social network analysis and problematized normative assumptions about networks and kinship relations (Dahinden, 2005; Schapendonk, 2015; Ryan, 2023), the studies that made the most significant impact within and beyond the field of migration research conceived networks in a more abstract sense. A characteristic case is Douglas Massey's (and his

colleagues') conceptual approach to migration process that came to be known as the migrant network model. For Massey et al. (1987, 1994), the migrant network was the set of social ties connecting non-migrants of the sending community to the migrants of the receiving communities. The network's members "carry reciprocal obligations for assistance based on shared understandings of kinship, friendship, and common community origin" (Massey et al., 1994, p. 1499). In their study of Mexican migration to the U.S., Massey et al. (1987, p. 140) observed that these reciprocal obligations are stronger among kinsmen ("family connections are the most secure bonds within the networks"), especially between fathers and sons who have "the strongest relationships" in the network. The existence of migrant networks decreases migration costs and risks and thus facilitates the migration of well-connected aspiring migrants. According to this model, when migrant networks reach a certain threshold, migration becomes a self-perpetuating phenomenon and cannot be curtailed by structural factors, such as restrictive immigration policies or a drop or rise in labor demand.

Evidently, in Massey's migrant network model, as well as in the earlier studies of chain migration, kinship was conceived in terms of solidarity, reciprocity and trust. On the one hand, the association of kinship with solidarity and reciprocity is the outcome of migration researchers' idealized notions of kinship. As Schneider (1980 [1968]) argued in his study of kinship in the U.S., kinship is not merely conceived as a biological relation but also as a set of relations with "diffuse, enduring solidarity." As members of the societies they live in, migration researchers often approached kinship in their studies as a relationship of solidarity.⁷ On the other hand, this is partially an outcome of how reciprocity has been theorized in relation to social distance in the highly influential work of Marshal Sahlins (1972). For Massey et al., reciprocity is stronger within the family and becomes weaker as social distance increases: "Kinship assistance is generally extended freely and openly up through parallel cousins. Among relatives more distant than these, the strength of ties falls off rapidly, however, and their roles in the migratory process are correspondingly smaller" (1987, p. 141). In Sahlins's concentric circles model, generalized reciprocity ("transactions that are putatively altruistic") exists in the inner circle (house/family), and as the distance from the inner circle increases generalized reciprocity turns into negative reciprocity ("something for nothing," e.g. theft). The migrant network model and the chain migration literature, in a striking similarity to Sahlins's (1972) concentric circles model, considered kinship a greater source of support and

⁷It is noteworthy to highlight that Massey, in collaboration with his co-authors, has extensively engaged with the scholarly work of Mexican scholars, including publications in Spanish, as well as ethnographic studies conducted in Mexico. Massey's association of reciprocity with kinship is not only grounded in his own empirical research but is also influenced by other perspectives that were prevalent in Mexican ethnography at the time. Although Massey did not explicitly cite Sahlins' notion of reciprocity, he engaged with the work of Larissa Adler Lomnitz (1977), whose ethnographic analysis of networks drew upon Sahlins' theoretical framework, particularly his understanding of reciprocity in relation to social distance.

of “generalized reciprocity” than other social relations and thus implied that the degree of assistance depended on social distance.⁸

The linking of kinship with reciprocity and trust poses challenges as it portrays families as a “safe haven” while relegating practices of exploitation, abuse, and distrust outside the realm of kinship. However, these unpleasant practices are not aberrations of kinship, but rather inherent to kinship and enabled by it. A closer engagement with kinship theory, such as with sociological accounts of intimate violence (Gelles, 2017) or anthropological approaches to the dark side of kinship (Geschiere, 2013), could make migration researchers more alert to these facets of kinship relations. This would help migration researchers better understand that the transfer of resources within migrants’ networks is not necessarily an indication of care and mutual trust: it can also be motivated by fear and distrust, which are not uncommon feelings in kinship relations (e.g. Sabar, 2010). Furthermore and more broadly, an engagement with kinship theory will offer migration researchers an analytic notion of kinship and help them reflect how their own ethnocentric understanding has shaped their research practices.

The next section turns to a different body of research within migration studies, the literature on marriage migration, and explores how the notion of “marriage” has been used in these studies and with what implications.

15.4 Marriage Migration Research

Over the past few decades, European and other countries have increasingly tightened conditions for spousal visas and marriage-based residence permits. Concerned with the exclusionary effects of these policies, a considerable number of migration researchers became growingly interested in studying topics related to marriage and migration. However, it is striking that the core notion of their inquiry, “marriage” has not been critically examined. Instead, migration researchers have relied on the state’s definition of marriage. Adopting a legal definition of marriage may seem reasonable, as only legally recognized unions are granted marriage migration rights. However, it has certain shortcomings that need to be considered.

, When researchers unreflectively use state categories, they unwittingly legitimize the state’s symbolic violence and contribute to state-centered epistemologies. “Marriage” is a particularly important category because it “involves a dynamic and creative vision of a shared future” (Carsten, 2020, p. 328). Through marriage, a

⁸This is also a more general tendency in the sociological literature of social capital, which considers networks resources and sees the negative consequences of social capital only for those outside the social networks. For Putnam (2000, p. 21), for example, “[N]etworks and the associated norms of reciprocity are generally good for those *inside* the network, but the external effects of social capital are by no means always positive” (emphasis added). Certainly, there have also been critical approaches to social capital that suggest a decoupling of social networks and resources and pointed out the downsides of social capital even for its holders (Portes, 1998, pp. 1–24).

wide range of social actors and institutions envision the future. Certain ideas of marriage allow migrants to imagine their future selves and the life they aspire to have. For the state, marriage is the institution that creates families that will raise the new members of the nation-state. Through marriage, the state envisions the society it desires to create. For this reason, marriage becomes a tool to shape the envisioned future for both spouses and the state, as well as other social actors like transnational communities. Therefore, the meanings and moralities of marriage are not singular, and it is crucial to not take the meaning of marriage for granted. Instead, one must explore how its meaning is produced.

Although the concept of marriage may seem straightforward and clear, it is difficult to establish a universal definition. Various forms of marriage exist, each sharing certain characteristics, but there is no common denominator to all unions that can be classified as “marriage.” This list of unions includes civil partnerships, religious weddings, same-sex marriages,⁹ companionate marriages, arranged marriages, polygamy and cohabitation, among others. In addition to differences in form, there are variations in the moral and regulatory frameworks that govern these marriages. What counts as a good and appropriate marriage differs from context to context, depending on constellations of culture, social class, religion, and so on. It is not uncommon for individuals, including migrants, to be married in more than one way and/or under different legal systems. For instance, in the Netherlands, couples are required to have a civil marriage before a religious one. The moralities of different marriages may overlap and coexist harmoniously, but there are circumstances in which competing moralities of marriage arise.

To illustrate my point, I will draw from my own research on West African migrants in Amsterdam. When Ghanaian couples apply for a spousal visa to the Netherlands, they must formalize their relationship. According to Dutch regulations, a civil partnership is equivalent to a marriage, and partners in civil unions are eligible to apply for a spousal visa. However, some Pentecostal Ghanaians who have entered into a civil partnership do not consider themselves married until they have a church wedding. This sometimes leads to partners not living together until the church wedding takes place, putting their relationship at risk of being seen as a “sham” by immigration authorities. Even after a church wedding has taken place, their relationship may not be socially recognized as a “marriage” if the man has not paid the bridewealth, the two families have not met each other, and the appropriate rituals have not been performed (see Van Dijk, 2004). This example highlights three different notions of marriage—civil, religious, and customary—each with its own meaning and implications for the couple. While the couple may consider one of

⁹The inclusion of same-sex couples in marriage migration research only after the recent legalization of same-sex marriage in a number of countries is indicative, on the one hand, of migration researchers’ reliance on the state’s definition of marriage and, on the other hand, of how the research agenda of migration studies has been so fundamentally affected by state politics. The legalization of same-sex marriage enabled same-sex couples to migrate via the formal family reunification route, but this does not mean that same-sex couples were not families before or that they were not mobile.

these marriages to be the most significant and representative of their union, the state and their families may prioritize the civil and customary marriages, respectively. If we focus solely on the civil marriage and ignore the other two, we miss a significant part of the picture: what holds meaning for the couple and is socially significant.

Relying solely on legal definitions of marriage risks overlooking unions that are socially significant for migrants but do not confer family migration rights. Such unions may include same-sex partnerships and polygamous marriages in countries where these relationships lack legal recognition, customary marriages, and unregistered religious weddings. Using an analytic notion of marriage, rather than relying on common sense categories and legal definitions, will allow migration researchers to engage with kinship theory. This is a crucial step towards considering cross-border marriages as simply marriages, rather than treating them as exceptional cases. This shift also helps minimize complicity with state-centered assumptions, which, as Drotbohm (Chap. 17, in this volume; see also Mazzucato, Chap. 12, in this volume) argues, requires migration research to “focus beyond the crossings of spatial and nation-state borders.” After all, marriage almost always involves some degree of mobility, whether it occurs across borders or not.¹⁰

15.5 Family Practices in Transnational Social Fields

Although the general tendency in migration research has been to treat kinship and the family as self-evident notions and presumably stable social units, studies of transnationalism have paid particular attention to how people work on kinship relations, maintain them and recreate them across national borders. Research on transnational family life conceived the family “*as a set of everyday practices* rather than an institution” (Montero-Sieburth & Giralt, 2021, p. 5) (emphasis in the original). Even though these studies have not explicitly problematized the notion of the family, their emphasis on the everyday making of family relations contributed to a dynamic conception of the family that diverts from legal definitions and ethnocentric understandings.

The key focus of this scholarship has been transnational families, which are “families that live some or most of their time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely ‘familyhood’, even across national borders” (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002, p. 2). Research on transnationalism explored how “familyhood” affects and is affected by migration and transnational conditions. Thus these studies emphasized the plasticity of kinship and family relations and contributed to a “cosmopolitan

¹⁰Exploring the different types of mobility that spouses engage in can also, as Mahendran (Chap. 14, this volume) suggests with her category of *mixed migration-mobility couples*, help contest normative assumptions in migration studies, such as the association of migration with cultural difference.

turn” in family research, which had been confined within the boundaries of the nation-state (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010; Mazzucato & Schans, 2011).

In contexts of mobility and change, kinship relations can undergo transformations in both content and form. In terms of content, the meaning and significance of certain relations may be reconfigured. For example, for migrant parents who live apart from their children, the ideas of what constitutes a good “father” and “mother” may shift. In such cases, everyday physical interaction and time spent with their children may become less significant, while the parents’ ability to materially support their children’s education and well-being may become more important. In terms of form, new family arrangements and types of relations can develop and flourish, while existing relations may considerably weaken. For instance, the new context of migration can give rise to marriages that cross boundaries of race, ethnicity, social class, and religion.

Changes in family life can emerge in response to the structural conditions created by global capitalism and the constantly evolving regulations of nation-states in managing human mobility. In the Global North, for instance, many women are able to balance their careers and family life due to the availability of affordable care work provided by migrant women, whose own children remain in their home countries under the care of other relatives (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002). By employing formal and informal practices of fosterage, migrant workers’ transnational childcare arrangements create and redefine kinship relations between caregivers, children, and parents, helping migrant families adapt to global inequalities (Coe, 2014; Poeze et al., 2017).

Another example of how external factors shape family practices and arrangements are the families that are forced to live apart due to restrictive immigration measures that impose difficult conditions for family reunification or exclude certain family members from migration rights (Strasser et al., 2009; Suerbaum & Richter-Devroe, 2022). Legal definitions of the family can affect transnational forms of family life and limit the ability of relatives to live together (Drotbohm, 2020; Bonjour & Cleton, 2021). Additionally, economic conditions and legal exclusion can constrain migrants’ capacity to support their loved ones, often leading to ruptures and tensions within families (Menjivar, 2000; Sabar, 2010).

Despite external conditions and imposed obstacles, migrants and their families are not passive. They actively try to create new family relations and seek innovative ways of doing kinship to navigate different kinds of impediments and to live meaningful lives (Piot, 2019; Drotbohm, 2020; Andrikopoulos, 2023). While the formal route of family migration is increasingly subjected to harsher requirements and stricter controls, it may still enable migration for those otherwise excluded from other privileged categories of migration. Migration through marriage, for instance, can be a response to states’ increasing efforts to illegalize labor mobility and restrict family migration to nuclear families under certain requirements (Böcker, 1994; Charsley, 2013). Therefore, cross-border marriages are arguably the most scrutinized family relationships by immigration authorities. In addition to marriage, other types of kinship relations offer solutions for overcoming not only the legal barriers created by the state but also various obstacles and difficulties in migrant and

transnational life. For example, migrants and aspiring migrants discover, revitalize, or forge relations of kinship with people who could assist them to settle and start a life in a new destination (Freeman, 2011; Kim, 2016; Piot, 2019; Geschiere, 2020). These relations can go beyond Eurocentric definitions of kinship and include relations of interdependence that are based on neither descent nor marriage. For instance, these relations can be developed through participation in religious communities, professional networks, or residence in the same localities. It is worth noting that these new relations are not always within the boundaries of ethnic communities, a point that could receive more attention in transnational scholarship.

A striking exception is Gerd Baumann's (1995) ethnographic work on cousinhood bonds among youth in a culturally diverse neighborhood of London. Through the lens of kinship, Baumann studied the social relations developed among young Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim South Asians, as well as Afro-Caribbeans and Whites in the neighborhood of Southall, who opted to describe these relations as cousinhood despite the absence of genealogical ties. Anthropologists of earlier generations would have refrained from approaching these relations as kinship, but Baumann, following Schneider's lead, explored the plural meanings that these youths gave to the notion of cousin and what it signified for them. Baumann showed how the figure of cousin became a point of convergence for people from different cultural backgrounds to express loyalty that crossed the boundaries of their ethnic communities.¹¹

Studies of transnational migration have offered an important corrective to existing approaches of family migration by shifting the empirical focus and analytical perspective. In many ways, these studies have gone beyond methodological nationalism and questioned the nation-state's role in transnational family life. More important, they have shifted the research focus towards the everyday practices of family members in transnational social fields and how these practices constitute the family.

15.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the problematic implications of migration research that adopts legal definitions and common sense categories of kinship. The lack of analytic categories often results in ethnocentrism, normativity, and state-centered epistemologies that misrepresent the social fields migration researchers study.

To address these issues, I suggest several steps for conducting more reflexive migration research. First, a closer engagement with kinship theory would equip migration researchers with concepts and analytic frames that family migration

¹¹For the use of the notion of siblinghood among West African migrants in Amsterdam, which crosses ethnic boundaries and is also used to describe their relationships with Dutch Afro-Caribbeans, see Andrikopoulos (2023).

researchers often lack. This would help researchers approach their field of research critically and reflexively. It would also help researchers become more conscious of the consequences of not problematizing state definitions of the family and how these categorizations affect migration research. Furthermore, an engagement with kinship theory would contribute to approaching the family life of migrants in the same terms as the family life of others, without construing migrants' family practices as something exceptional.

Second, considering mobility and kinship as interrelated aspects of social life would contribute to a de-exceptionalization of family migration as a problem to be explained. This would help contextualize migration's interrelation with kinship forms and family practices and how this interrelation differs from other options of mobility. In this way, the impact of borders, state regulations, and nationalism on family life would become evident and not be taken for granted.

Lastly, using methodologies that focus on kinship and family life practices would help migration researchers go beyond normative assumptions of what kinship is and how it operates in migratory contexts. Ethnography, social network analysis, and detailed biographies, among other methods, are adequate for exploring the complexities of social relations and relations of interdependence in daily life. Ethnography can shed light on the discrepancies between official discourses and norms of kinship and practices of kinship in daily life. Social network analysis, as long as it goes beyond the metaphoric notion of the network, will help researchers map the circulation of resources within certain networks and draw conclusions on the significance of certain relations and how these relations become stronger or weaker through various forms of exchange (Ryan & Dahinden, 2021). Biographical accounts with an emphasis on detail and what appear as contradictions to outsiders will also help clarify family relations and their transforming meaning in social life.

Although these steps may not provide definitive solutions to all conceptual challenges in family migration research, they can certainly assist in addressing some of the pivotal issues within the field.

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Part IV
Reflecting Reflexivities

Chapter 16

Rethinking Reflexivities in Migration Studies. A Conversation



Yolanda Hernández-Albújar and Ali Konyali

This contribution is the result of a conversation about reflexivity that we, Janine Dahinden and Andreas Pott, had with our colleagues Yolanda Hernández-Albújar and Ali Konyali. We asked these scholars for this exchange because we found their perspectives particularly insightful: Yolanda is an outstanding scholar whose work is characterized by a strong engagement with reflexivity, subjectivity and biography. She has also recently co-edited a reflexive anthology on *Migrant Scholars Researching Migration*.¹ Ali, on the other hand, is not only highly regarded in the academy for his incisive analysis of migration-related issues, but he is also a long-standing member of the Global (De)Centre,² an international network of critical and reflexive social scientists, artists and others. In recognition of his sharp and critical views on the question of reflexivity—views that we value highly—we have invited him to participate in this debate.

We hope you enjoy reading this conversation as much as we enjoyed listening and participating in it.

Questions by Andreas Pott and Janine Dahinden

¹Gemignani, M., Hernández-Albújar, Y., & Sládková, J. (Eds.) (2024). *Migrant scholars researching migration: Reflexivity, subjectivity and biography in research*. Routledge.

²<https://globaldecentre.org>

Y. Hernández-Albújar (✉)
Universidad Loyola Andalucía, Seville, Spain
e-mail: yhernandez@uloyola.es

A. Konyali
Universität der Künste Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: a.konyali@udk-berlin.de

16.1 Who We Are in an Academic Context

Andreas: In order to dive quickly into our conversation, could you please shortly introduce yourself?

Yolanda: Sure. I have been conducting research on gender and migration, that is the field I am most interested in. I am also very leaned towards qualitative methods, in particular visual methodology and visual ethnography. I have conducted research with Latino mothers in the United States, African refugees in Italy, and Syrian refugees, women, in Lebanon. Right now, I am involved in a research project with transnational families in Honduras and I am very interested in critical research, namely: How do we produce knowledge and how do we include those people that actually provide us with that knowledge, how do we include them into the conversation? So, it is not really about doing a study or conducting a study about them but conducting a study with them. And that of course requires another set of ethics and reflexivity. So, that's my perspective, I consider myself a cultural sociologist, at least if I have to define myself somehow.

Andreas: Ali, do you want to continue?

Ali: To introduce myself is not very easy for me. Never in this academic context. It is difficult to pin myself down to a discipline. I guess, I have been trained multi- or inter- or even transdisciplinary. I would sometimes call myself a migration researcher, sometimes I would make it even more general and say I am a social scientist, a social researcher. Right now, I am basically a researcher at a German institute for migration and integration research, the DeZIM institute. Before, I have been working with Andreas in a project on the local production of Islam in two middle-sized cities in Germany. And before that, I have been working on social mobility and the upward mobility experiences of descendants of migrants. That was the topic of my dissertation, supervised by Maurice Crul. Other than that, what I think might be important for this conversation is, I don't know, a certain passion in research. It has become one of my passions to denote boundaries. If we want to start biographically, I would say, boundaries not only matter in terms of placing myself, but also how I am being placed by others. Talking about "them", what migration studies often do, I can consider myself partly as one of "them". As one of the outsiders within, I would consider myself as one of the marginalised ones, you know, observing processes of marginalisation and exclusion in research. I focus more and more on these questions and try to position myself collectively with other researchers who are at the margins or who are very power critical. I noticed that I try to take any opportunity in order to learn more about this.

16.2 Moving Beyond Reflexivity as a Conceptual Exercise: Struggles and the Juxtaposition Between Migration and Work

Janine: You have both been thinking a lot about issues of power. Maybe from different angles. What are, in your eyes, the most important problems you identified in terms of knowledge production and power in migration studies?

Ali: In general, I am not sure if migration studies is the field into which we are moving right now. Probably you could consider it a field of knowledge production and critique of knowledge production. I consider it much more a field that goes beyond research, that concerns research in terms of the labour, the work of research, the work itself. I consider it a bigger issue than only about how do we conduct our research, or you know, even beyond who conducts the research. It is very difficult to pin down because it is so dynamic, because you basically are doing it while you are talking. What we are doing right now is also again constructing something, right? You know you could go as far as what is the truth, who owns the truth? Or who dominates the truth? I would say there is a problem that there is a, even if it is invisible, there is a labour division that you can see in other fields of society as well, a division that is being produced and reproduced in the field of science. And this labour division is being upheld by, I would say, binary thinking, who is insider or who is outsider. And any attack to this labour, attack in a broader sense, or any criticism to this labour division is being guarded off. And you know the ones who consider themselves within try to protect themselves against any attack by keeping or making these divisions even stronger. That is what I observe you could say.

I would say the problem is that some people, based on this division of labour and who is in and who is out, are expected to contribute less. Of some people less is expected basically. There are lower expectations, there are instances where I notice that some people are considered as suitable for certain contexts and others not. Some people are addressed in certain ways and some people in others. And this all keeps up this binary division which becomes stronger and stronger. For instance, in migration research I have observed how data collection and theory generation are kept as two separate parts of knowledge production. So that those who collect the data due to their specific competences that enable access, such as language, are in turn not considered equipped enough to work on generating the related theories out of the analysis of this data. Of course, this is a very sharpened way to put it and it is very difficult to pin this down in concrete instances, so it is a claim that is very easy to reject.

But the critical voices become louder as well. It is no wonder I would say that these two books³ are now being published and that the debate is entering more and more into, let's say, mainstream migration research. But you know, you could link it eas-

³This book, but also Gemignani et al. (2023).

ily to wider societal developments. I am sure the attacks of Halle and Hanau⁴ have done something; I am sure Black Lives Matter did something to us all. We start to question. And we also then start to realise, oh, this not only concerns my work, but it concerns my life. This kind of duality is present for those who are on the margins or on the peripheries all the time, I would say. They are aware that their biographical history, their biographies play a role in terms of these expectations I mentioned.

Janine: Can I just ask one or two questions? I totally see what you mean, that it is a larger societal issue. But two things: First, which role does migration play in these processes you just described? And second, I think it is very interesting that you are saying that these voices became louder. I agree, I think they did, they became louder in universities, they became louder on the streets, etc. At the same time, and this is maybe a quite Western European point of view, we also have resistance against these voices. Meanwhile, this has become quite clear. You have this divide about what is labelled cancel culture, for example.

Ali: Well, agreeing that we somehow talk about migration research in the widest sense, I would say it has to do a lot with the combination of migration and work. I mean nowadays racism research has started to get institutionalised, I experienced that in my own institute in Germany. And there are attempts to include what has been considered “activist knowledge” more and more into these institutionalised contexts. But I would say the juxtaposition or maybe the combination of migration and work is essential. Because for racism obviously the whole colonial history and the history of slavery and so on is basically the core origin of the study of race. For my personal position the guest worker career of my grandparents and then its impact on my parents and on myself is very essential. Because then you realise that there has been a historical division of labour, and there are continuities of that division of labour. You notice these continuities not by kind of seeing “okay, his grandparents have received demands to do that work, and that is why he is not in a leading position.” That is not what I mean. It is more about continuities in terms of who is expected to do what kind of work, who is expected to contribute what exactly to the knowledge production and there it becomes a much clearer case how these two things are basically woven together. And then you can draw a line towards the production of knowledge. And then the second point would be, well, we need to move beyond a kind of only conceptual inclusion of marginal positions but towards something that could be considered as some sort of epistemic or epistemological solidarity. So maybe we have to look at knowledge refusal: Whose knowledge is being refused at what point? Whose knowledge enters the field? So, I think we need to move beyond, it sounds very cliché, beyond reflexivity as a conceptual exercise. And then to link it again to the struggle between migration and work.

Andreas: Would this also include a constant attempt to de-essentialise our objects of study or our categories? I wonder whether we also have to move beyond binaries and binary juxtaposition.

⁴“Halle” and “Hanau” refer to two recent far-right terrorist attacks in Germany. On October 9, 2019, a gunman attempted to attack a synagogue in Halle on Yom Kippur; after failing to enter, he killed two people nearby. On February 19, 2020, a far-right extremist in Hanau murdered nine people with migrant backgrounds at two shisha bars before killing his mother and himself.

Ali: I would say yes and no. We have to move beyond essentialisation. I think, for me for example, what Spivak considers strategic essentialism has been a means to discover solidarity, to discover collectivity.⁵ These things that we always present when we are teaching students how to do research right, we say it is a collective enterprise and then you enter, and you notice “oh it is not that collective actually”. Talking about strategic essentialism, some might criticise the way I have been handling the term Person of Colour when I use it for myself and so on. But I noticed that it is an important step towards this solidarity, so you cannot just say okay you want to de-essentialise, these categories don’t matter for us. No, no. It is, I would say, only one step of it. But I mean the knowledge is already out there, that is what I also mean by knowledge refusal. I am only now reading into Black feminist studies of the 1980s and maybe even earlier. And they have been talking about the same or very, very similar experiences which I think I and others are making right now. So, we should refrain from reinventing the wheel but rather look at whose knowledge actually plays a role in our knowledge production. And why and why not. So, I would say let’s turn away from this strive for excellence, this strive for innovation you know, publish more and so on, but see what do we have already.

16.3 The Neoliberal University and the Standardisation of the (Diversified) Knowledge Producer: Critique Versus Reflexivity?

Yolanda: Actually, Ali beautifully brought in a point that I wanted to make. Because I would like to mention structure. The inflexible structure in the knowledge production. And I am talking more from the academic perspective. This is very true in particular for young scholars who try to make their way in any field. And it is also more related to the neoliberal state of mind which is “you need to produce something”. And that thing that you are producing needs to be sellable, it becomes a sort of capital. It is a capital for your CV. It needs to be tangible. Needs to be a product that is materialised in a form of grant or a high impact article published in a high impact journal. This structure is very inflexible when it comes to studies in general but in particular, in migration studies. In migration studies there are two branches that need to collaborate: on one side, we have the general knowledge about data, numbers, and statistics -who is coming, how many, when, from where- which is important. But the human aspect, the social aspect that sometimes cannot be completely understood using those methods, requires qualitative approaches I believe. However, they also need a particular language. Which is still very scientific somehow.

I think that structure is also limiting who is speaking and how we speak. You mentioned Spivak before, Ali, when she is talking about the subaltern—can the subal-

⁵Spivak, G. (1993). Can the subaltern speak? In L. Chrisman, & P. Williams (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader* (pp. 66–111). Harvester Wheatsheaf.

tern speak? It is not really about “can he speak?”, or “can she speak”. Of course she can, right? Are we ready to listen to different discourses? That is the point here. So, for the subaltern to speak, that group, that community, that person needs to speak with our own terms, language, and discourses. Therefore, somehow, they are forced to leave their own, you know, way of communicating and way of exploring and way of knowing. Everybody can bring something into this huge production of migration studies but always on those terms and under those conditions. You can be as original as you can and as you wish if that product becomes some sort of capital. It is becoming almost impossible. You can do photography, you can do film, you can do whatever you want to do. But it needs to produce something. So, if you want to participate in the conversation you have to speak that language. That is the way of acknowledging your career, and of course, you can say you are free to participate in the conversation or not. Yes and no. You still need to pay your bills, to have a job, you love researching but you need to write. So, it is a very complex web.

Andreas: Yolanda, I am very grateful for these aspects. And I see Ali nodding. But let me raise a question. I am not sure whether I understood correctly. It sounds as if this is a new phenomenon or an accelerated phenomenon due to neoliberalism. But isn't this phenomenon of being socialised into a certain community, being a young scholar at a certain point, the feeling of being tailored maybe more strongly than the more established ones, is this anything new? Or is this anything specific to migration studies?

Yolanda: I don't think it is an issue that only belongs to migration studies, I think it is a general issue for many other disciplines in humanities in particular. Social sciences as well but I think it is more present now with younger scholars than with people that entered academia 20 years ago. They also had their own issues of course. But they never felt so constrained within the structure of academia or within the structure of the dominant language in migration studies. So, they felt freer to explore, to question and to criticise. That's something that I get from my conversations with senior scholars. So, I believe the struggles and the pressure and the intensity of knowledge production in the sense of developing some sort of tangible capital in the form of a research grant or article, that pressure is stronger today.

Ali: I certainly agree with what Yolanda said but that is only one part of it. So, there is neoliberal university, you know this strengthened neoliberalisation universities are undergoing. It is a double-edged sword to say the least. I profited to a certain extent, as someone who is from a working-class background. Who was and still is afraid of reading books because you know it is something that I am not used to, something I have never seen at home basically. For me neoliberalisation comes with standardisation, and this standardisation was for me a means to go to places that were not meant to be for persons like me or for the subordinate you could say. But it adds to the pressure of course because there is more competition and with more competition you know I think we are all aware, you know the elbows are being stuck out and I think then the question is, so if there is a standardisation of the knowledge production, I would claim that there is also a standardisation of the knowledge producer. So that the margins for the professional self or the academical self also become limited.

I think what this structure then produces is, it produces loyalty rather than solidarity. I mean, we are all aware of this and maybe this has always been the case. Let me say it a bit sarcastically, there have been kings, the professors, and around them there have been their soldiers and so on, and this has always been the case. Today, maybe the soldiers and the players are a bit more diversified. But I think that the demand for loyalty is becoming stronger because the pressure to succeed is stronger because of more competition. So, you need to become a certain standardised type of scholar and everyone who is questioning this, you could argue, is a threat to the game. Because I mean ten people try and only one succeeds so you want to be the one. You don't want to be the one who is criticising all the time and who might end up being placed outside, because s/he is somehow uncomfortable, he might have great ideas or she has great ideas, but you rather not touch, let's rather not go. I might not have dared to go into research if it would not have been for this standardisation.

Janine: I think it is extremely important to bring in these neoliberal aspects also because it means this standardisation, which I think always goes towards the mainstream, an imaginary who is the standardised knowledge producer as you said, Ali. At the same time, don't you feel that critical voices became louder and that things started to change?

Ali: I mean yes, the voices become louder because I would say there are more people who belong to the formally repressed group. More and more entering, not in relative terms maybe but in absolute terms. But my question is: What or who contributes most to the increasing volume of these voices? My hypothesis would be that it is exactly those who are being placed outside by this structure, whose hard work is contributing to these changes. So, to give you an example out of my current work, I have recently asked someone who is active in civil society NGOs. I said well, in Germany suddenly even the ministry is now talking about intersectionality. Wow, this is good, isn't it? The topic seems to enter the mainstream. And then she said: right, it is good, because it is based on our hard work, we have sacrificed our lives for it, we, and others. This means, it isn't coming from within, so to say. I mean yes, there are some people who conduct critical research or reflective research, but my question would be, does reflexivity itself contribute to any change?

16.4 What Can Reflexivity Do and What Not? Whose Reflexivity?

Andreas: I agree that we should not confuse social changes with reflexivity. We realise that to some extent reflexivity becomes mainstream, becomes a tag, some label. Instead, we should rather make a stronger effort to change the practice of research, to change the ways we observe migration.

Yolanda: I am not sure that reflexivity needs to come from the margins necessarily, but I believe that as migration scholars, we need to discuss and question our own privilege. As scholars, as non-migrants or as migrants that are of a different or more privileged background. Ali is second generation, right Ali? I have been a migrant myself for 17 years, so we, I don't want to speak for you Ali, so I will talk about my

experience. I had to navigate this being a European migrant in the United States, but speaking with a thick Hispanic accent, which therefore put me in the category of Latino women. And as a Latino woman I only could speak about particular topics in particular ways. It didn't take that long for me to transform and to reinvent my identity as a Latino woman in the United States. And I had to question myself when I was interviewing Latino migrants, to remind myself that I come from a privileged position, because I was considered by others, in this case the other for me was the American society, as a Latino. But when you interact with these women you are the European, so I had to constantly reposition myself depending on the audience and the other actor I had in front of me, and I had somehow always tried to fit expectations.

This is an interesting thing about reflexivity, there is not one kind or one sort of reflexivity, not even for one person. A person will have to develop and change and transform and tailor her or his reflexivity, depending on the moment, on the time in your life cycle, on the person you speak to. Because of that, it is so difficult to pinpoint, describe and elaborate a method for reflexivity, because it is not a method. It is a way of acting and thinking. It is not a method. It is not A, B, C. That would be great. It is not like you introduce data, you cross tabulate, and here you have to apply a factor. No. You have to move that thinking, constantly, it's a process. Reflexivity is a process. Coming from whatever source, it is a process, and you must be involved in that process and willing to change, willing to be transformed and willing to question yourself and to question the others. And sometimes you decide not to change but at least you have your own reasons why not to change.

Obviously, here I am talking more about positionality than reflexivity. Still, in order to position ourselves, reflexivity is absolutely required. In other words, positionality is a consequence of the act of reflexivity.

To me, the problem with migration studies or within migration studies is that we do not question our privilege while studying migrants. It is not about simply positioning ourselves at the beginning of the research, or doing a statement at the beginning of the chapter, "I am a white European woman", that sort of confession is not reflexivity. Reflexivity is not at the end of your chapter either, at the end of your article, at the end of your research where you say: by the way, this is my position. That's not what we should call reflexivity. Rather, it is something that accompanies you all the time. And it is almost like intersectionality, you cannot take it away. It is a vector that you cannot separate yourself from. It should be part of your research. Because the more I read about reflexivity, and the more I think about reflexivity, the more difficult it is for me to describe and give a definition and explain it. Sometimes, because it is so intrinsically related and embedded, it is almost like embodied.

Ali: Recently a colleague of mine said "But Ali, you cannot always question". She said "You cannot always question our codes, the academic or scientific codes, sometimes you have to simply use them and to navigate with them."—"Yes", I said, "I would if they would remain the same, but they are being placed in front of me, almost arbitrarily". Let's take objectivity for example. Whenever I try to criticise this paradigm of objectivity, people tell me "Well, that is outdated, no one demands a researcher to be objective anymore". But it is not true, it is exactly this arbitrariness that makes it a power instrument: When is something objective or not objec-

tive? I have learnt to navigate between this typicality and atypicality, that has become part of my cultural capital. As I said I was trained in a very standardised way, but I always tried to kind of stick my neck out. I go to events, and I state the obvious, basically, the elephant in the room: Let's talk about my experience. And then I notice the defensive attitude of my colleagues. Oh, I think I touched upon a problem here. So, I would say I am navigating through this thin line between typical and atypical, and that might be part of my marginal position.

It is also the politics of the game, I noticed that the more I play with this, the more I distance myself from this standardised way, the more I am under attack, you know. I mean literally under attack. I noticed that this equilibrium is a very unhealthy state of existence, it's a potential risk to your health. I think this navigation is part of the attempt to break down the barriers I was referring to in the beginning. Looking for answers and ways ahead we should also look for critical pedagogical literature, like Paulo Freire and you know researchers that build upon his ideas. I think that it is very valuable to look at how we could break down the barriers between the learner and the one who is teaching, the researcher and the one who is being researched. Rather than just taking a critical distance to our research we have to dive into it and become aware that we are talking about a political stance whether we want it or not. So maybe to finish, Harding calls this, in terms of feminist literature, she calls it the permanent partiality, we must acknowledge that, as feminist scholar, I am permanently partial.⁶ I would argue that we cannot refrain from taking this stance. If we really want to break down the barriers.

Janine: Thank you, Ali. I think that is a very important point, because it brings us back to the questions of boundaries, of being in or out. So, can you only be, like Sara Ahmed called it, a feminist, or anti-racist, or whatever killjoy if you're in a privileged situation or position?⁷ Also, Yolanda, I really liked what you said about these different positions you had all of the sudden, as a Latina, and the way that reflexivity is actually a process.

Yolanda: This idea of the confession or the position as a white privileged woman, it seems is only for particular minorities who must position themselves; I read other researchers where the researcher never positions himself. Which brings in also something that Ali mentioned before, which is the idea that if you belong to a particular community, you are only allowed to study that community, it is expected from you that you will speak in the name of that community. I mean, it is very complex, and I don't see that expectation in other researchers. Perhaps, it is that kind of reflexivity that I am looking for, reflecting on why I should position myself and you don't, why should I explain why I want to study this and that, and you don't? Why do you have the power to study whatever you want to study, and it is fine, but when I do it, I have to justify it? It is problematic when we request reflexivity only from some groups of researchers. I believe that reflexivity should be "mandatory" for

⁶Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives*. Cornell University Press. See also: Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist studies*, 14(3), 575–599.

⁷Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.

everybody. But again, then we run the risk of commodifying reflexivity. You mentioned the commodification of reflexivity, Ali. How do you explain something that is not fully explainable? How do you define it? Because -again- we need to define it. Or perhaps not. It is complicated and it is fascinating also. Isn't that what makes reflexivity so necessary?

Andreas and Janine: Thank you very much, Yolanda and Ali, for this inspiring exchange.

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Chapter 17

Shake It, Stretch It, Share It! Moving Reflexivities Beyond Migration



Heike Drotbohm

17.1 Introduction

This edited volume arrives at a time when we are both qualified and obliged to take stock. For almost 20 years, migration research has concerned itself with the central epistemological, methodological, and ethical challenge of escaping the uncomfortable entanglement (or complicity, even) with our object of research. In their seminal 2002 article, Wimmer and Glick Schiller problematized the extent to which a certain nationalist thinking shapes migration studies, reifying distinctions between legitimate citizens and immigrants, who are perceived, framed, and reified as outsiders and support-seekers. This foundation provided fertile ground for what the volume I edited with Boris Nieswand in 2014 proclaimed as the “reflexive turn in migration research” (Nieswand & Drotbohm, 2014). That perspective crystallized in conjunction with a series of publications appearing around that same time (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013; Dahinden, 2016) and precipitated a veritable boom in research and consequent publications that responded from a wide innovative range of perspectives, adopted an array of research approaches, and asked poignant new questions (Amelina, 2020; Dahinden et al., 2020; Lang et al., 2021; Moret et al., 2021; Shinozaki, 2021, to name but a few). The installation of the standing committee “Reflexivities in Migration Studies” within the IMISCOE network in 2020 and the focus of the network’s annual conference in 2024 on “Migration as a Social Construction: A Reflexive Turn” also testify to the popularization of this critical approach.

This collection’s contributions demonstrate the tangibility of this now-mature research field of “reflexive migration studies” and the diversity of reflexivity-based approaches to the phenomenon, design, perception, and experience of migration.

H. Drotbohm (✉)
Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Mainz, Germany
e-mail: drotbohm@uni-mainz.de

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The thorough theoretical reflection of these papers showcases and extends the state of the art of migration studies after the reflexive turn and explores the chances and challenges that accompany these renewed understandings of migration's social constructedness.

In fact, reflexivity is nothing new to the social sciences, as the editors elaborate in the introduction. Numerous scholars have used the term, often referring to classics such as Latour (1987) or Bourdieu (2001) to clarify the contours of a required or (rather) unavoidable component of qualitative methodologies. Reflexivity represents a mandatory exercise that reveals the standpoint-bound nature of research by explicating who is (re)searching (what subject position do(es) the researcher(s) occupy?), how (with what means, tools, questions, and perspectives), why (with what interests, goals, and theoretical or political underpinnings?), for whom (who benefits from this research?), and on what (how is the object of research constituted and what positions are involved in its determination?). It also means asking what consequences this position has for research and life beyond research. Biases—understood as unreasoned judgment or preconceived inclination—cannot be avoided. Nor should they be; instead, they should be considered productively and made explicit. In the introduction to a recently published special issue on “Reflexivity between Science and Society”, Marguin et al. (2021) assert that reflexivity permeates (or should permeate) the entire research process, from constructing the object of investigation to choosing methods, handling and processing data, and interpreting and managing findings (Marguin et al., 2021). However, for von Unger (2021), theoretical and methodological reflections should be coupled with an ethical reflexivity that not only anticipates tensions and conflicts but also harnesses them in response to unequal positionings in the research process *for analytic purposes*. Similarly, Dean's *Doing Reflexivity* (2017) demonstrates that however the concept is understood, practicing reflexivity often invokes one's positioning within an extended field of dilemmas whose tensions cannot be fully resolved. That is, it is completely insufficient to merely problematize one's privileged position as a kind of admission of guilt. Instead of making research easier and removing obstacles, reflexivity should be understood as a “tool [for gathering] more accurate and insightful research data” (Dean, 2021, p. 183).

That the demand for reflexivity has so reverberated (especially) in migration research in recent years relates to the frequently problematized risk of the nature of research reproducing the authoritative contours between self and other and the binary between citizens and migrants. The plea to decenter migration in migration studies (Römhild, 2014; Dahinden, 2016) means avoiding a possible epistemological and political alliance with those forces that follow the logic of the nation-state by segregating, controlling, enclosing, and normatively demarcating migration from the implied normal state. Avoiding this kind of complicity is a political, ethical, and intellectual problem that this volume takes seriously. However, it becomes apparent that each of the authors gathered here carefully circumvents easy posturing to ensure that they are on the safe, ethically clean, “good” side. Instead, each individual chapter testifies to a profound scepticism about the purely performative dimensions of reflexivity. Most migration researchers would certainly recognize that research

itself shall always remain an uncomfortable and challenging endeavour in a highly unequal, unjust, and, in many ways, violent global society. Resolving these asymmetries entirely within the context of the research process remains—at least at this point—an unrealistic agenda. Hence, comparable to Peter Pels’ perspective on the aim, or attempt, to decolonize the discipline of anthropology (2018), reflexivity can be understood less as an achievable status quo than an always unmet ideal that we should, nonetheless, persistently strive to attain.

Some of the following considerations refer to the contributions that this volume assembles, which should all be understood as part of the necessary consolidation of reflexivities, which, from the first moment of critical awareness of a given problem constellation, aims at an epistemologically egalitarian, historically informed, and collaborative practice of interdisciplinary knowledge generation.

17.2 “Shake It!” Disrupting the Contours of Mobility-Related Categories

For a long time, the labels and categorizations that particularly determine the lives of migrants by reifying and underpinning social inequalities constituted the locus of migration studies. In this vein, Zetter’s work proved groundbreaking, providing a guide to articulating the transformations of the refugee label in the context of globalized processes of forced migration within which, for example, new distinctions have been repeatedly made between labels such as “spontaneous asylum seekers”, “bogus asylum seekers”, “economic migrants”, “trafficked migrants”, and “overstayers” (Zetter, 1991, 2007). The power of such labels is undeniable. As Menjívar recently articulated in her presidential address to the American Sociological Association, these categories translate state power into stratified entitlement to care and support, rendering them critical to understanding normative assumptions about social groups (Menjívar, 2023). Independent of this focus on state-generated and used categories, the question of how people are labelled, differentiated, and hierarchized within the governance of mobilities constitutes a central research concern. In conjunction with gender, sexuality, religion, and age, mobility- and space-related categories have been brought into the field to justify or reject the legitimacy of migration concerns, claims to support, and rights to stay (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013; Fischer & Dahinden, 2017; Pott, 2018; Sheller, 2017, 2018; Van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020; Bialas, 2023).

Surprisingly, all of this fails to sufficiently capture those variants of mobility-related distinctions not directly and explicitly mapped via categorization processes. Recent scholarship around the notion of “human differentiation” (Hirschauer, 2023, see also Dizdar et al., 2021)¹ acknowledges that knowledge production in the social

¹This paper’s argument profited considerably from being part of the Collaborative Research Centre 1482 *Studies in Human Differentiation* at Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz and fruitful discussions with my colleagues involved therein.

sciences is always simultaneously part of societies' "ethnociologies". In order to get rid of those preconstituted meaningful distinctions, Hirschauer (2023) suggests to systematically separate "distinction", "typification", "categorization", "classification", "differentiation", "discrimination", "stigmatization" and "alterization". Regarding the particularity of "categories", Hirschauer writes: "Categories make difference out of distinctions: They convert the initial act of differentiation into a feature of the differentiated. Categories collate objects and transform them into exemplars" (Hirschauer, 2023, p. 5). What I consider particularly relevant to migration research here: as migration scholars we tend to focus our research on the production and meaning of categories, but we also have to deal with those processes of differentiation that take place outside, below or beyond categories.

Already in 2008, Bakewell lamented the limited scope of research that remains within policy-relevant frameworks, calling for migration research to move beyond the frames of reference of regulating and controlling practitioners. Several researchers have built on Urry and Sheller's work on mobility (Urry & Sheller, 2006; Sheller, 2017, 2018) to include those experiences and articulations of mobility-related distinctions that are not (or not yet) reflected, problematized, and regulated by governmental control. For Wyss and Dahinden (2022), this approach helps us use specific localities, sites, and places as the starting point of research by asking what kinds of mobilities unfold within the respective context, divorcing the notion of mobilities from the crossing of nation-state borders (Drotbohm & Winters, 2025). Reiffen's work (2024) in an Argentine shopping mall exemplifies this kind of research, focusing on how people with completely different mobility experiences and biographies come together in their everyday and how they negotiate their positions, whether in terms of mobility or other forms of difference. This methodological levelling of mobility and migration also allows us to include the pre- and post-mobilities of persons who do not (yet) migrate or no longer migrate but who nevertheless participate in transnational life worlds. Consider, for example, those members of transnational networks who support the migration of their relatives with information, money, and moral support, along with hands-on care for those staying behind, or the position of deported migrants or other involuntary returnees who face international mobility restrictions but still understand themselves as part of the society that deported them and (try to) participate in lives extending across national borders. In both cases, the act of claiming membership and contributing to the transnational entanglement of societies is essential for understanding the logics of cross-border lives (Drotbohm, 2009, 2012).

Building on these ideas, I would like to emphasize that migration, understood as human mobility across national borders, does not take place (as we have long known) within containers of systematic and seemingly unambiguous classification into categories. Instead, if we configure migration as a form of encounter between actors differently endowed with power, in the social "project" of migration, cognitive and affective perspectives intertwine with varying processes of knowledge generation at different levels of perception and articulation. For example, instances of bureaucratic interaction with authorities of visa application, border control, or the welfare state are flanked by encounters with numerous other actors who also

distinguish (il)legitimate positions of entitlement and deservingness. Often very messy, diffuse, and opaque while also extremely powerful, these forms of differentiation warrant more attention in the future. As Shpresa Jashari (Chap. 2) makes clear in this volume with a captivating narrative capturing the affective dimensions of her foreign classification during her primary school years, teachers are also among the classifying authorities. So too are neighbours, bus drivers, and tourist guides, all actors who contribute to understandings of cultural diversity, social exceptionality, as well as in- and exclusion in their own particular ways. Adopting a slightly different lens, this volume's contribution from Crul and Lelie demonstrates what research can look like when it subtly shifts the focus of observation away from migrants and towards those actors who produce migration as a "mode of exception". That chapter impressively illuminates the attitudes of phenotypically white people who, in different sociocultural milieus—whether workplaces or educational institutions—contribute to creating an inclusive environment, acting as gatekeepers, or fostering a hostile, racist climate.

Here, too, a reflexive research perspective comes into play. However, while these approaches critically investigate the perspectives of the classifiers, they do not substantially consider how the act of categorization crosses to those being classified: Mobile actors also distinguish, evaluate, and classify different dimensions of mobility and the generation of subjectivities. If we understand, as stated above, migration not only as spatial movement but also and firstly as knowledge production from differently positioned standpoints, we should also include the knowledge production of mobile actors, the movers, border-crossers, and travellers who distinguish between possible routes, modalities, and destinations of migration, between different actors with positions charged with different dimensions or degrees of power, between policies that can be interpreted or applied permissively or restrictively, and between possible variants of support, both en route and in the destination countries that may later become starting points for renewed migration. As I have shown elsewhere with the example of one individual actor who reflects her changing experiences of mobilities across different households, localities, countries and continents, the question what kind of mobility corresponds to a normal everyday, a desirable goal, a duty, a burden, a constraint or a violent experience is not only perceptible to and in flux for the researching observer (Drotbohm, 2024).

"Shake it!" represents a plea to avoid understanding the contours of migration categories as given and fixed and instead focus on the emerging character of distinctions from the perspective of an interactive, reciprocal negotiation between and among multiple actors. Shaking categories means examining exactly in which contexts social differences are thematized and when they become salient or effective at the psychological, affective, social, political or legal level. This means asking how distinctions reinforce themselves in intersectional terms when mobility-related categories crisscross with other categories—whether race, class, gender, sexuality, age, or physical ability—and when these distinctions mutually reinforce or weaken each other. It also requires contemplating what signs of dissolution of distinctions we can identify. A dissolution, or undoing, of categorization can occur at the level of social policies, such as when a seemingly consolidated form of classification stops being

considered relevant. This can happen for political reasons. For instance, the terms “Volksdeutsche” or “Reichsdeutsche”, which had been used in the context of large-scale resettlement programs during National Socialist rule, were administratively invalidated after 1945. The fact that terms such as “Aussiedler”, “Russlanddeutsche”, “Fremdarbeiter”, or “Gastarbeiter” are now part of history also concerns the ethical sensitization that developed over time (Panagiotidis, 2022; Zeppenfeld, 2023; Aivazishvili-Gehne, 2023). Furthermore, the dissolution or disappearance of terms can take place at the level of social interaction, namely, when those categorized resist certain forms of classification or question and contest the meaning of categories. Examples include generic but pejorative terminologies such as “alien”, “unauthorized”, or “illegal” (Hamlin, 2022).

To refuse complicity with state assumptions also requires a focus beyond the crossings of spatial and nation-state borders. We must establish research perspectives that consider the everyday, banal, and entirely self-evident movements of people within their respective social spaces and the social interactions that result from those movements. A suitable example comes from a text by Cecilia McCallum (2005), in which she traces the spatial movement of a person within the Brazilian city of Salvador da Bahia, making it clear how that an individual’s classification changes depending on the context and type of social interaction. When subjects move through space and time, not only their racialization but also the mutual constitution of whiteness and blackness as well as class-related perceptions shift. Knowledge of the moving body is produced by multiple actors who classify themselves and others through the performance and perception of differently layered mobilities. In a different but comparable way, Mazzucato’s (Chap. 12) contribution to this volume demonstrates flexibility, both by disturbing the assumed boundaries of categories (in this case, the category of “youth”)—and by zooming into the particularities of the category by tracing its complexities under different and complementary perspectives. In this way, too, we can contribute to de-exceptionalizing migration (Dahinden, 2016; Hui, 2016).

17.3 “Stretch It!” Moving Beyond the Confines of the Contemporary

My second criticism concerns the reduction of migration studies to contemporary contexts and processes. We have an enormous amount of historical research at hand that considers the specifics of the historical circumstances, thus pointing to the historically particular nature of spatial movements, the mechanisms of recording and control, and the experiences of migration in a given historical context or period (Bade, 2003; Harzig & Hoerder, 2009; Lucassen et al., 2010; Manning & Trimmer, 2020; Friedrichs and Severin-Barboutie, 2021; Panter et al., 2023; Zahra, 2022; just to name a few). However, we still lack research that focuses on the temporal developments and processual emergence of mobility-related thinking, labelling, and

classification. Again, I begin my reflections with the prominent role of migration-related categories, which have long supported but also (at times) limited research on mobilities. The problem that remains underexplored is the fact that these categories have not always existed, quasi-naturally, but that they have come into the world iteratively, adapted repeatedly over the course of history, with meanings shifting with historical circumstances. It is precisely these deeper layers of time, the genealogies of taxonomic change in the course of history, that make apparent why the category—as a time- and place-specific form of thinking—has assumed the contours, connotations, (un)contestedness, and political significance that it has today.

Of course, I am not the first to identify the historical processuality and emerging quality of migration-related social categories. I share my critique with this volume's authors, especially Khazaei (Chap. 9) as well as Raghuram and Sondhi (Chap. 6), who lament the historical amnesia in migration studies and the imperative to also study the colonial legacies relevant to understanding key modes of distinguishing different power positions. Taking the "post-migrant" as a starting point, Schneider (Chap. 10, also this volume) invites us to dig deeper into the biographies and genealogies of terms that prefigure debates and our thinking about society as such. The work of Mayblin and Turner, "Migration Studies and Colonialism" (2021), represents probably the most comprehensive contribution to the intersection of the historical sciences and migration studies, addressing the entanglement of migration studies with not only colonial perspectives but also inherent and enduring forms of colonial differentiation observed in the practical fields of refugee settlement, forced migration, and asylum. Several years earlier, Nail already challenged us to conceptualize the historical conditions that allowed "The Figure of the Migrant" (2015) to emerge. For Nail, these migration-targeting historical processes result from different types and degrees of social expulsion (2015, p. 5), leading us to differentiate between, for instance, the tourist, the vagabond, the businessperson, and the explorer. Nail's work convincingly interrogates the territorial, political, juridical, and economic underpinnings that have contributed to the sedimentation of these forms of differentiation. Applying a comparable historicizing perspective, Tazzioli (2020) digs deep into the notion of "the mob", a category with particularly negative connotations that has been used since the seventeenth century to think about marginalized popular collectivities. Over time, the notion travelled from associations with the "Lumpenproletariat", the working class, criminals, and other types of "outlaws" to "migrant multiplicities", that is, constellations grouped and partitioned by migration agencies and states attempting to downplay the political dimension of migration movements and migration control (Tazzioli, 2020, p. 35). As Friedrichs (2024) correctly states, during particular moments of time, international actors renegotiate the relationship between territories and populations by grappling with the distinction between numerous types of mobilities and migration; eventually claiming a universalist or more particularistic definition on who is entitled to protection and support. Mobility-related categories, their strengthening through legal procedures, or their weakening through the invention of alternative categories by competing actors, are part of these renegotiations. Finally, the question of how categories travel in both time *and* space becomes particularly clear in Besteman's

“Making Refuge. Somali Bantu Refugees and Lewiston, Maine” (2016), which carefully traces how the contours of the category “Somali Bantus” came into being over time through contact between, first, jareer refugees and Italian colonists, then Somali militias, and later humanitarian workers in various African countries. After their resettlement in the US state of Maine, the bureaucratic apparatus of the international refugee regime provided a new language for group recognition, leading the label Somali Bantus to again acquire new meanings (Besteman, 2016).

These and several other works (e.g., Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Reinecke, 2018; Schinkel, 2018; Boatcă, 2021; Wyss & Dahinden, 2022; Reinecke & Löhr, 2024) remind us that *all* (i.e., not only migration-related) forms of social order are historically grounded, demanding that these layers of meaning remain the target of scholarly exploration. From my perspective, the importance of concepts that do *not* relate directly to mobility but do pertain to a specific (post)colonial entanglement that contributes to the differentiation between different types of social actors has yet to receive sufficient attention within migration studies. Of course, the idea has been reconciled with categories of gender and sexuality (Stoler, 2016; Lugones, 2020) as well as with notions of “family” and “marriage” (Bailey & Boyle, 2004; Drotbohm, 2009, 2018; Brettell, 2017; Moret et al., 2021; Kofman et al., 2022; Andrikopoulos, Chap. 15, this volume). However, the historical foundations of various other socially powerful social categories can also be interrogated in cross-border contexts. For example, the category of age has been studied in terms of its particular agency in the transition from the nebulous category of adolescence to the bureaucratic category of adulthood, especially in contexts of cross-border movements and the assessment of “truth” (Bialas, 2023). Nonetheless, most migration studies follow the bureaucratic logic of age, ignoring that different world regions and locale actors may classify age (or “childhood”, “youth”, or “the old”) differently and that perceptions and classifications of age also transform over historical time.

Surprisingly enough, a similar situation occurs for the category of race. Although the perception of phenotypic differences, the racialized differentiation of different migrant groups, and racisms in the destination countries of migration could eventually already be called over-researched, additional understandings of colourisms, racialization, and other forms of stereotyping, stigmatization, and exoticization (beyond race) in countries of origin and the question of how body-related differentiation and hierarchization have changed over time have received far less attention. Furthermore, beyond this binarism, transnational dimensions of racialization and colourisms can also be identified, again as part of specific histories of (trans)national and postcolonial entanglements. For instance, while anti-Black racism is widespread across Europe, mechanisms of exoticization, discrimination, and racism in Germany still refer to a *particular* intellectual project of European enlightenment and layers of Afro-German histories, struggles for social justice, and the normativity of German whiteness. The multiple entanglements of German capitalism with other world regions beyond its former colonies also distinguish the country from other post-imperial powers, in which othering terms, depictions, and labels eventually refer to other places and racializing processes. Such history-sensitive insights

that capture the nuances of human differentiation would be especially revealing in transnational settings that see people's physical appearances valorized or stigmatized differently at different times and in different localities (Hohl, 2022; Lukate & Foster, 2023).

Finally, it is critical to return to my plea to include the classifications produced by mobile actors, which also have a history. We can address the temporal transformation of migration-related labels and categories by using historical sources to ask how migrating subjects have engaged with, appropriated, protested, or possibly rejected categories that were sometimes a burden, sometimes apparently banal and sometimes a promise of freedom. Biographical methods can also be used to understand how migrants relate to the changing dimensions and circumstances of categories over time (Drotbohm & Winters, 2021; Wyss & Dahinden, 2022). A key example is the refugee label. Reconstructing the learning experience of a young woman fleeing from Central Africa to Brazil, and later to Canada, I tried to show that especially the administrative dimensions of the refugee label under certain conditions of suffering, can be perceived as a promise, in reference to international policies of protection and the provision of humanitarian care (Drotbohm, 2024). However, as humanitarian studies have repeatedly recognized, following shifting complexities of renegotiating belonging, the refugee category also emerged as part of a politics of (mis)representation, alienation, and victimization (Kumsa, 2006; Zetter, 2007). Against this backdrop, "stretch it" should be understood as a plea to employ flexible perspectives of knowledge production to extend the (spatial and temporal) boundaries of assumed categorical confines.

17.4 "Share It!" Involving New Types of Actors in the Postcolonial Research Agenda

It is unnecessary to reproduce the extensive literature that has emerged over the last decade from the call for decolonial approaches to research. Several contributions come together in this volume—notably, Ponzoni, Ghorashi, and Rast, Jashari, Khazaei, and Raghuram and Sondhi—to summarize the possibilities and challenges of a new research paradigm, engaged in "other" ways, that may (someday if not yet) contribute to greater epistemic justice. What becomes clear is that we remain entangled in a transitional or test phase that sees criticism of outdated research procedures being formulated with increasing clarity while empirical implementation continues to be limited. Raghuram and Sondhi (Chap. 6, in this volume) unambiguously criticize the degeneration of decolonization as a buzzword, a fashionable research tic that operates on a purely rhetorical level, as in the case of citation practices. Their critique—"one can add decolonization to one's research topic and stir"—is entirely accurate. Their call for reflexive, participatory, self-critical, and empowering research that shares, gives back, steps back, and practices humility may seem radical. However, this programmatic contribution mainly articulates how

fundamental the reforms of academic structures and ways of working would need to be to truly reduce complicity with colonial relations of power.

As a particularly positive example from collaborative research-based practice, I would like to draw attention to the highly accessible book “Decolonizing Ethnography. Undocumented Immigrants and New Directions in Social Science” (2019), which sees Alonso Bejarano, López Juárez, Mijangos García and Goldstein, researchers with very different biographic backgrounds and learning trajectories collaborate to use ethnography as a tool for self-empowerment, public advocacy, and “personal transformation” (ibid., p. 11). That the members of this research team not only identify with different genders, generations, and education and income levels but also different milieus, mobility backgrounds, and political attitudes provides ample space to reflect on blind spots, obstacles, the apparent failure of certain research processes, and the need for readjustment. Furthermore, their articulation of the very different consequences of their shared research for their private and professional lives offers the opportunity to reflect on the challenges of academic-activist engagement. The quadrilogue between this volume’s two editors and Yolanda Hernández-Albújar and Ali Konyali (Chap. 16, this volume) provides additional angles for reflecting on potential avenues and challenges of conducting collaborative research.

Above all, as several contributions demonstrate, truly sharing requires a radically different kind of research practice. Such an endeavour should act differently—in an egalitarian, participatory, decentered, and self-critical sense—from the first instance of a critical engagement with what should become a reflexive research process. Meanwhile, the contributions collected here also show that the requirement to share research can be spread across many more shoulders. The call to share more fairly also (evidently) refers to our neighbouring disciplines, whose bodies of knowledge can provide significant impulses for the implementation of reflexive research, as the contribution by Ponzoni, Ghorashi, and Rast makes clear, highlighting the challenges of close collaboration between policy and research. At the same time, we should not ignore the fact that this type of sharing represents an ideal with ethical and psychological limits, especially in the context of research about and with actors whose political values we do not share and whose epistemologies correspond to a political practice that we want to resolve as part of the collaboration. For example, from my perspective, we have yet to resolve the challenges of collaborative knowledge generation by hegemonic or even violent actors, whose views could provide valuable insights into these domains from within power structures (Shoshan, 2021; Zenker & Vonderau, 2023).

To briefly offer support only to the central tenets of the brilliantly written positionings brought together in this volume, we must first question the dominance of English as the language of science and adopt the everyday languages of our collaborative partners (see Bastia and Kofman, Chap. 7 as well as Schmoll, Chap. 8, in this volume). This should also be reflected in the curricula of study programs because the biographical phase of student learning lends itself particularly well to language learning. Second, we must expand the act of publication far beyond citing Black and female academics to also consider how we might include migrant voices

in the acknowledgements and co-authorships of our publications. Indeed, as Bartels, Schäfer and Stielike (Chap. 4, this volume) remind us, conducting research with migrants and “studying up” or “sideways” to involve different sets of actors implies making knowledge practice the object of migration research. This “double reflexivity”, as they call it, requires both personal involvement and analytic distance to recognize our own positions and impacts within the worlds we study.

Finally, there is an evident need for a completely new kind of collaboration with funding institutions. To integrate the ideas, theoretical perspectives and practical aims of multiple actors into our research projects from the very beginning, we need funding to organize exploratory workshops that enable the development of research ideas and methodologies to be collaborative from the very beginning. Conducting research in an appropriately equitable manner demands sincerely addressing, from the outset, questions of who is who, who wants what, who contributes what, and what our limits are. This requires sensitizing our funding institutions to the fact that the demands of such collaborative approaches necessitate much slower progress, with set deadlines often producing unreasonable and damaging temporal pressures that negatively affect our collaborative relationships. Acknowledging not only the unequal tools and speed of scientific reflection and production but also the fact that differently gendered, classed, aged, or racialized researchers are challenged differently in and through their everyday lives means recognizing that shared science will always mean slow science.

We can almost certainly improve not only the quality and legitimacy but also the impact of social research if this multiplication and levelling of actors’ perspectives becomes part of our future epistemological and methodological innovations. In this sense, “share it” implies the endeavour to transcend the binary between the researcher and researched to better understand who or what actually contributes to a given agenda or form of problematization and understanding. In the end, sharing questions—rather than (only) data and results—involves acknowledging that all participating actors are (in their own specific ways) mobile, differently positioned, and (re)searching.

17.5 Concluding Thoughts

Although this essay’s title may come across as light-hearted, migration is by no means an ebullient affair, and neither is migration research. The longstanding engagement with the ethical dilemmas and conundrums in this research field testify to the deep identification with the political challenges inherent in stratified mobilities and the governance of transnational migration. Indeed, understanding reflexivity as a warm-up for the serious business of conducting research will ultimately only serve the cultural capital of the researcher and legitimize a mode of knowledge (re)production that reifies and cements an unequal, asymmetrical, and, therefore, violent relationship. The willingness to render migration studies reflexive, to shake, stretch, and share it, must certainly not degenerate into a monstrosity of ethical

consciousness that we carry before us to ward off critical questions. On the contrary, reflexive research should always extend beyond the comfort zone of assumed knowledge and established procedures, also involving those actors whose political positions and values we do not necessarily share (e.g. those affirming a protectionist stance towards the state and border control, or who represent xenophobic or reactionary opinions).

Before I end, I would like to warn not to throw the baby out with the bathwater when dealing critically with mobility-related categorization processes, but rather to make explicit the sometimes unequal power relations between migration—as a particularly central form of knowledge production about human mobility and belonging—and other socially powerful categories. Not all categories are equally meaningful everywhere, in all political contexts and social interactions. That migration (or neighboring categories such as forced migration and asylum) sometimes represents the crucial, most powerful form of social classification, which trumps or eliminates others by separating and segregating, should not be forgotten, even if we try to move beyond the confines of classical migration studies.

Some of the contributions gathered in this volume articulate a deep and certainly justified scepticism about the superficial and rather performative character of the reflexive turn in migration studies. However, we can also protest that a reflexive mode is far from established in all phases and areas of research, including fields outside of migration research. This implies the need to sustain the development of two central pillars. On the one hand, we must continue to work on the standardization of a categorical-critical, historically grounded and truly decolonial, egalitarian research practice. On the other hand, the demands of the reflexive turn should also be carried over to neighboring research fields, not only “humanitarian studies”, “ethnic studies” or “diversity studies”, but also fields that assume no relation with migration or mobilities. Recognizing and acknowledging (im)mobilities in all dimensions of a normal but at the same time continuously transforming everyday life will remain an artful practice in the future. Beyond reflexivity, this process should see creativity, determination, and humility towards any research(ed) subject emerge as the standards of social and intellectual encounters. This implies the possibility of implementing the demand for a stronger standardization of reflexivity in all those domains of knowledge production in which people powerfully sort other people into different kinds.

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